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ERASMUS and the HUMANISTS

LANDMARKS IN HISTORY

Edited by BERNADOTTE E. SCHMITT

ERASMUS and the HUMANISTS

BY

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Transalpine humanism, unlike such movements as Italian humanism and the Reformation, is rarely presented as a well-defined entity. Although it has often enough been pointed out that the humanists who flourished north of the Alps differed from their kinsmen in Italy, the attempt is seldom made to regard the Transalpine Renaissance as a distinct force with an individuality of its own. One usually speaks of the Renaissance and the Reformation as if the former were simply a compact unit rather than a vast complex of widely different organs. In the present work, however, only one phase of the Renaissance will be depicted and analyzed, namely, Transalpine humanism; and this phase will be differentiated from both Italian humanism and the Reformation.

Those who look upon Transalpine humanism as a relatively independent force instead of a mere sub-division of a larger movement, can readily understand the rôle played by such leaders as Reuchlin, Lefèvre, Colet, and Erasmus,—men who simply cannot be classified among the champions of Protestantism or counter-reformation. It should be admitted that there was room in the age of Erasmus for a group of independent thinkers who refused to identify themselves with either Luther's cause or the plans of Loyola. In making such admission, however, one need not defend the viewpoint of Erasmus and his followers. For a student of history it will be sufficient to comprehend what thousands of well-meaning

Protestants and Roman Catholics could never fathom,—namely, the desire on the part of the prince of the humanists to follow a course of his own and to view both Protestantism and the counter-reformation as unworthy of martyrdom.

The relation between Transalpine humanism and Italian humanism on the one hand and between Transalpine humanism and the Reformation on the other hand is one of the most fascinating problems in the history of modern civilization. This problem in its entirety has never been solved for the obvious reason that scholars are not yet fully acquainted with the process by which ideas spread from individual to individual and from country to country.

It is both customary and proper to point to Italian humanism as the chief source of Transalpine humanism, particularly if the term humanism is defined in a narrower sense. All historians agree that the word humanism is closely related to the Latin noun *humanitas,* and also to the English noun humanity. Again, it is agreed that all humanists were especially interested in the study of classical literature. The Italian humanists were noted as a rule for their aim to exalt human nature, to exult in physical power and pleasure, to attack scholastic philosophy and ecclesiastical tyranny, and to magnify the importance of the world of the physical man as compared with life hereafter, where the soul or spirit will reign supreme. Hence the name humanism, which is often contrasted with asceticism.

It should be noted, however, that many of the Transalpine humanists were deeply religious, while some of them were actually ascetics. The name humanists was applied to them merely because of their interest in classical literature, and not because of their disapproval of asceticism or

even of scholastic philosophy. That is the reason why one should be very careful in defining the term humanism. That is also the reason why it is futile to describe Transalpine humanism as little more than a transplanted Italian humanism. Those humanists north of the Alps, who like Peter Luder, resembled the Italian humanists the most nearly, were men of inferior caliber and lacking in national or international influence and prestige. The great leaders in Germany, the Low Countries, France, Spain, and England were all men of great moral and religious power. Although every one of them was greatly indebted to Italian humanism, they all showed a considerable degree of individual and national independence.

Much the same could be said about the relation between the Transalpine humanists and such men as Luther, Calvin, Loyola, and their numerous adherents. Superficial research would impel one to assert that Erasmus was changeable in that he first supported Luther and afterwards turned against him. It has too often been believed that Erasmus had no definite policy and cherished no firm convictions. A careful analysis of his life and work, on the other hand, will reveal a multitude of facts which disqualify such assertions. Since Erasmus in a large measure personified Transalpine humanism, his conduct and his writings are the most convincing proof of the integrity of this movement.

Long before the adolescence of Erasmus, however, a distinguished group of scholars in Germany and the Low Countries had begun to disseminate ideas which may be termed the early form of Transalpine humanism. The most celebrated of these was Rudolph Agricola (1444–1485), who was properly styled the Petrarch of Germany, because

of his love for the classics. His principal composition was a work on rhetoric, named *De Inventione Dialectica,* which became so popular that in the University of Paris it largely supplanted Aristotle's rhetoric. More interesting, however, and perhaps more important, was his *De Formando Studio,* a booklet devoted to the reform of curricula in the schools. Agricola resembled the typical Italian humanist in that he cared little for the well-being of the common people, refused to accept a steady position and preferred to lead the life of a roving Bohemian, hankered after fame and glory, and sought the friendship of influential magistrates and prelates. Upon Erasmus he exerted great influence; when the latter was still in his teens he revered his learned compatriot as the noblest exponent of the Renaissance outside of Italy.

Another accomplished humanist was the Dutchman Wessel Gransfort (1419–1489), who was more religious than Agricola, and more closely associated with the middle classes; hence a more typical embodiment of Transalpine humanism. He was a friend of the monks, a loyal son of the Church, but not entirely orthodox. His views on justification by faith, the priesthood of believers, indulgences, the sacrament of penance, and papal authority approached to a surprising degree the views entertained by the early Protestants. In the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew he surpassed for a time all his contemporaries in Germany, the Low Countries, and England. He was an intimate friend of Thomas à Kempis and of many other great mystics. Nevertheless, he is usually classified among the Transalpine humanists. His works were well known to Erasmus, who always praised him highly, while Luther believed that on all essential points he taught exactly what Luther himself preached.

Gansfort might easily have become a world-famous figure by being treated as a dangerous heretic, but he was too much of a humanist to fight for any cause, or to preach to the people.

The two leading humanists in Germany before 1517 were Jacob Wimpheling and John Reuchlin. Wimpheling (1450–1528) was a native of Alsace, a man of sound qualities, whose ripe scholarship and religious fervor found favor with both ecclesiastical authorities and educated laymen. He composed an essay entitled *Germania,* in which he glorified his country with enthusiasm.

John Reuchlin (1455–1522) was the greatest Hebrew scholar of his time. Because of his interest in Hebrew literature, he was opposed to a plan advanced by a converted Jew, named Pfefferkorn, which aimed at the destruction of all Hebrew books except the Old Testament. As a result of his opposition, he was accused of heresy by the Dominican monks of Cologne. Their leader was Hoogstraten, the chief inquisitor of Germany, who was supported by the University of Cologne. Most notable in the controversy which ensued was the activity of one of the professors, named Ortwin Gratius. The latter was really a capable scholar, but he felt that Reuchlin did not set enough store by the Christian tradition and the unbelief of the Jews who had crucified the Christ. Reuchlin defended his views in a pamphlet entitled *Augenspiegel,* or *Eyeglass.* For years the process dragged on at Rome, with nearly all the humanists supporting Reuchlin and practically all the monks opposing him.

At the height of the controversy several German humanists, led by Crotus Rubeanus of the University of Erfurt and by the knight Ulrich von Hutten, composed a series of

letters, of which the first volume appeared in 1515 and the second in 1517. They were styled *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum,* or *The Letters of Obscure Men.* Nearly all of them were addressed to Gratius, and most of them contained biting satire, exposing the learned professor and the monks to ridicule. Since it is customary to view these letters as the product of enlightened humanism, it should be noted here that the majority of them were not only grossly unfair to Gratius and to monasticism, but they also contained obscene allusions to certain practices which were prevalent in a few circles, but not nearly so common as the letters implied. Although Luther was moved by them to pronounce Gratius an "ass," Erasmus was less ignorant. He wrote: "*The Letters of Obscure Men* greatly displeased me, even from the beginning. . . . I like satire provided it be without insult to anyone." One reason, however, why Erasmus disliked the letters was because he had himself been mentioned in them.

Very few of the German humanists who flourished after 1515 seem to have made a favorable impression on Erasmus. He himself was born and raised in the Low Countries, which, although technically a section of the Holy Roman Empire, were in reality independent of this state. He used to make trips along the Rhine after the year 1500, but he never visited central Germany. He acquired his university education in Paris and became intimately acquainted with the learned Gaguin and other French humanists. German scholars, on the other hand, did not attract his attention until much later.

The best friends Erasmus had were the English humanists, and the country which appealed to him most was Eng-

land. This may have been because he happened to meet such genial spirits as Colet and More, and because he was accorded such a warm reception in England. His impressions were sincerely expressed in a letter composed at the end of his first visit in 1499, where he said: "I have found the climate here very agreeable, and I have met with so much civility and so much learning that but for curiosity I do not now care very much whether I see Italy or not. When I hear my Colet I seem to be listening to Plato himself. In Grocyn who does not marvel at such a perfect world of learning? . . . What has nature created more gentle, sweet, or happy than the genius of Thomas More?"

It would be a fascinating task to search into the origins of Erasmus's opinions and to trace the influence exerted by him in various countries. At the present time, however, very little can be said with certainty. Even the year of his birth is not positively known, although the available evidence points to 1469 as the probable date. From 1475 to 1486 he was strongly affected by the Brethren of the Common Life in Deventer and elsewhere. This semi-monastic organization had produced several important mystical writings and also some new methods in education. But it so happened that Erasmus grew intensely interested in humanism pure and simple. In 1486 or 1487 he entered a monastery, named Steyn, located near Gouda, in the vicinity of the place where Gerard, his father, and Margaret, his mother, had once lived. Monasticism attracted him, because it would enable him to study. His later references to this experience are in fact very misleading. It is also wrong to assume, as most of his biographers have done, that he disliked the monastic life. His first booklet, entitled *On*

the Contempt of the World and his *Book Against the Barbarians* in their original form are eulogies on both monasticism and humanism.

Erasmus left Steyn in 1492 or 1493, but he remained an Augustinian Canon Regular until the monastic vows became so obnoxious to him that he obtained a dispensation from Pope Leo X, absolving him from the same (1517).

After the year 1506 he joined the majority of the humanists in ridiculing the monks. In many other ways he resembled the typical humanists: He showed practically no interest in the well-being of the common people, and he consistently sought the friendship of wealthy patrons. He frequently resorted to flattery. Nor did he scruple at deliberate lying in order to advance himself. Science meant almost nothing to him. Dogma, on the other hand, meant little more. He was always greatly interested in religion, but rarely in doctrine.

His writings plainly show how his mind developed from year to year. Since they were numerous enough to fill a dozen folio volumes, only a few can be mentioned here. In 1501 he composed the *Handbook of the Christian Knight,* which reflects the wholesome influence of Colet. Practical religion is here contrasted with empty formalism.

The next important work was the *Familiar Colloquies,* a text-book of Latin style, based very largely on Erasmus's own experiences. The stories are in the form of conversations and aim to impart much useful information about religious, social, and political conditions. The first edition was composed in 1497, but it was not published until 1518. It was enlarged from time to time. The same was done with the *Adagia,* or *Adages,* a collection of proverbs culled from the

classics, published for the first time in 1500, and containing 818 adages, while the edition of 1508 counted 3260 proverbs.

The most widely read work of Erasmus was his celebrated *Moriae Encomium,* or *The Praise of Folly,* completed in 1509 and published in 1511. This little book made Erasmus the most famous scholar in the world and entitled him to bear the name of prince of the humanists. Here he satirized the principal follies of mankind, but, unlike the authors of *The Letters of Obscure Men* he did not single out any individual for special mention. "It is true," says one American biographer, "that all satire starts with the axiom that the world is full of fools, but whereas some men, like Brant and Swift, take this to heart and gird at folly as wickedness, others like Erasmus and Rabelais, find the idea infinitely amusing. . . . So the Folly was neither vice nor stupidity, but a quite charming naïveté, the natural impulse of the child or of the unsophisticated man. Though her birth is derived from Pluto, she is no grim demon, but an amiable gossip, rather beneficent than malignant."

Those who now read the book may feel somewhat disappointed, for it lacks the positive element of a reformer's constructive plans. It was easy for Erasmus to criticize existing conditions, but he disliked the work of constructing different conditions. Luther was moved to write in 1532: "When Erasmus wrote his *Folly,* he begot a daughter like himself, for he turns, twists, and bites like an awl; but he, as a fool, has written true folly."

One should bear in mind, however, that Erasmus could be serious when he chose. He contributed much to scholarship and to educational reform. He knew the value of ridicule and through his *Praise of Folly* he was able to reach

thousands of well-educated men and women who became convinced of the need of thorough-going changes in church and state. He did not wear a martyr's crown, nor did he lead an army into battle. But he proved that in many cases the pen is mightier than the sword. Moreover, there have always been numerous eminent thinkers who have maintained that the reforms proposed by Erasmus, although not carried out by him, were intended for an age of greater enlightenment than that which witnessed his struggle with ignorance and superstition, with bigotry and intolerance. It is true, at least, that Erasmus for a period of about twenty years was the prince of the humanists and the intellectual king of Europe.

Erasmus embodied elements of both Transalpine humanism and Protestantism. Like Wessel Gansfort, whom he and Luther so greatly admired, he fully comprehended the existing abuses in the Church. When contemporaries said that he had "laid the egg of ecclesiastical reform" and that "Luther hatched it," they expressed a profound truth. The sale of indulgences, simony, nepotism, empty formalism, the indolence and immorality of many monks and parish priests, the indifference of several popes and of numerous bishops to true religion,—all of this he thoroughly exposed in his writings. He prepared the field in which the great reformers of both camps—Protestants and Roman Catholics —labored to reform the Church. But where he and other learned humanists differed from Luther and Calvin and Loyola was in their attitude toward the importance of dogma and ecclesiastical institutions.

Erasmus spoke in the year 1515 as hundreds of well-known churchmen have spoken in the twentieth century.

In his opinion it mattered little whether the miracles recorded in the Bible had actually happened or not. As for the doctrines of transubstantiation, of purgatory, and of justification by faith and works, he believed that they might be interpreted in various ways. He thought it was very foolish for anybody to stake his career on the definition of doctrines, and he said on many occasions that to imitate the life of Jesus was far more important than to argue about dogma. Those who considered him a coward lost sight of his great intellectual capacity. As Henry Charles Lea has aptly said, "Erasmus, when rightly considered, was one of the most heroic figures of an age of heroes. Nowhere else can we find an instance so marked of the power of pure intellect. His gift of ridicule was the most dreaded weapon in Europe and he used it mercilessly upon the most profitable abuses of the Church."

DATA ON THE SOURCES

The Letter to Servatius. This letter is probably the most trustworthy account composed by Erasmus in which he discussed his own life and his principles. Servatius of Rotterdam was at one time a very intimate friend of Erasmus in the monastery of Steyn, and afterwards he became prior of this monastery. To him Erasmus's experiences in the monastery were well known, wherefore in writing to him the learned humanist found it futile to distort the truth. Servatius had remained in Steyn after Erasmus's departure and shortly before the year 1514, he commanded Erasmus to return. The latter refused, explaining his motives in the lengthy epistle given below. It was written on July 8, 1514, when he was staying in the castle of Hammes near Calais. The original version is reproduced in P. S. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami,* vol. 1, no. 296, and a good translation is found in F. M. Nichols, *The Epistles of Erasmus,* vol. 1, no. 290. Another translation was published in a recent biography by J. J. Mangan, vol. 1, pp. 367–367.

The Letter to Reuchlin. It proves that Erasmus sincerely sympathized with the great Hebrew scholar when the latter was being condemned as a heretic. It was composed at Basel in August, 1514 (P. S. Allen, ep. 300; F. M. Nichols, ep. 294).

The Letters of Obscure Men. The Latin title was *Epis-*

tolae Obscurorum Virorum. The first part was published in 1515 by Wolfgang Anxt of Hagenau, and a second edition in 1516 by Ulrich von Hutten. It is not known who composed the first series of letters, but it is certain that Crotus Rubeanus of the University of Erfurt was responsible for a large share of them. The second series issued from the pen of von Hutten and were published in 1517. Both parts were edited by F. G. Stokes, whose edition (1909 and 1925, entitled *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*) was supplemented by an English translation, upon which the selections given below have been based.

The Colloquies of Erasmus. The first collection was small and was composed at Paris in 1497, and intended for the perusal of his pupils. Erasmus had not planned to publish these colloquies, but when in 1518 Beatus Rhenanus, an Alsatian humanist, published them at Basel in November of that year, not even asking the author for his permission, Erasmus quickly revised them. His improved edition appeared at Basel in 1519, under the title of *Formulas of Familiar Conversations by Erasmus of Rotterdam, useful not only for polishing a boy's Speech but for Building his Character.* A much larger edition followed in 1522, while the edition of 1524 was styled *Familiar Conversations.* Both were published by Froben. Further additions were made in the year 1524 and on several other occasions until the edition of March, 1533, completed the process. The Latin title was *Colloquia.* The earlier colloquies are the more interesting. Among later additions there were some very obscene passages, which reflected the influence of Italian humanism on Erasmus.

The Praise of Folly. The first edition was printed at

Paris in 1511 by Gilles de Gourmont. In the same year a reprint appeared at Strassburg, while a revised edition was printed at Paris in 1512. A useful commentary was added in 1515 by Gerard Lystrius, a friend and countryman of Erasmus. Before Erasmus's death in 1536, forty editions appeared, while many translations were published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Latin title was *Moriae Encomium*. The book exerted enormous influence, and even a casual reader will conclude that Luther owed much of his initial success to the preparation made for his work by the *Praise of Folly*.

THE SOURCES

Part I. The Letter to Servatius

1. *Erasmus to Servatius* [*P. S. Allen, Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi,* I. no. 296; *F. M. Nichols, The Epistles of Erasmus,* no. 290.]

Most gracious Father, your letter having been tossed about by a great many hands, has reached mine at last, now that I have left England. It has indeed given me very great pleasure inasmuch as it still breathes your old affection for me. I will answer it briefly, writing, as I do, on a journey, and will address myself to the main questions about which you write.

The opinion of men is so various (as each bird has his own song), that it is impossible to satisfy everybody. I at any rate am disposed to follow whatever course is best; God is my witness. For if I gave way at one time to the emotions of youth, that has been corrected by age and experience. It was never my intention to change either my mode of life or my dress, not because I approved of them, but to avoid scandal. For you know that it was by the pertinacity of my guardians and the importunate exhortations of others, I was driven rather than persuaded to that kind of life;[1] and that I was afterwards kept to it by the reproaches of

[1] Erasmus deliberately chose the monastic life.

Cornelius of Woerden [2] as well as by a sort of shame, although I had found it was not at all suitable to me.

Different persons have different aptitudes. By my bodily constitution I was always hurt by fasting, and when once awake, I could not sleep again for some hours. My mind was absorbed in the pursuit of Letters, for which in that profession there is no use; so that I do not doubt that, if my life had been free, I might have been counted, not only among the happy part of mankind, but even among the good. When, however, I saw that I was quite unfit for the kind of life which I had undertaken, not voluntarily but by compulsion, nevertheless since it is regarded by the public opinion of our age as an act of impiety for a man to abandon the calling which he has once adopted, I had made up my mind to accept with patience this part of my unhappiness as well as others. For you know how unfortunate I have been in many respects, but I think this more grievous than anything else, that I was thrust into that kind of life from which I was most averse both in mind and body; in mind, because I shrank from ceremonies and was fond of liberty; in body, because even if I had liked the plan of life ever so much, my constitution was not adapted for such trials.

Some one will perhaps object that I had my year of probation, as they call it, and was of ripe age. Ridiculous! to expect that a lad in his seventeenth year,[3] especially one brought up in study, should know himself, a great thing even in an old man! Though indeed for my own part I did not approve the life from the first, much less after I had tasted it, but was ensnared by the reasons I have mentioned.

[2] This monk had persuaded Erasmus to enter a monastery.

[3] He was born in the night of Oct. 28–29, 1469; and he entered Steyn in 1486 or 1487.

I admit that a really good man will live well in any kind of life; neither do I deny that I was myself inclined to great vices, but without my nature being so corrupt that I might not have been led aright, if I had had a suitable director, whose religion was Christianity and not a Jewish superstition. Meantime I have looked to see in what kind of life I should be least bad, and I think it is that which I have followed. I have lived among sober persons, and in literary pursuits, which have turned my thoughts from many vices. I have been able to pass my time with men who really savor of Christ, and by whose conversation I have become a better man.

I do not boast of my books, which perhaps you despise. But many persons confess that they have been made, not only more learned, but better by reading them. The love of money never affected me. Neither am I in the least degree moved by the vanity of fame. I was never a slave to pleasures, though formerly I was inclined to them. Drunkenness and wine-bibbing I have always avoided. Whenever I have thought of rejoining your society, I have been reminded of the jealousy of many, of the contempt of all; how cold, how silly, how utterly without any savor of Christ were the conversations, and how unmonastic the meals! In fact, of a whole system of life, *in which, if you take away what they call the ceremonies, I know not what is left that one would choose.*[4] And lastly, I have thought of the weakness of my constitution, increased by age and sickness and labors, which would prevent my satisfying you, while I should kill myself. I have been for several

[4] The words printed in italics, here and in some later passages in this letter, are Greek in the original.

years subject to the Stone, a serious and fatal disease. For some years I have drunk nothing but wine, and am obliged to be careful in the choice of it on account of my sickness. I cannot be indifferent to food or climate. For this disease, frequently recurring, makes the strictest regimen necessary; and I know the Dutch climate, I know your mode of living, not to speak of morals. Therefore, if I had returned, I should only have brought trouble to you, and death to myself.

But you perhaps think it a great happiness to die among your brethren. That is a sort of persuasion which imposes not only upon you, but on almost all. We rest our religion upon place, dress, food, or some trifling ceremonies. We think it is all over with one who changes a white coat for a black, wears a hat instead of a cowl, or occasionally shifts his locality. I venture to say, that *the greatest bane of Christian piety has arisen out of these so called religions,* although it was perhaps a pious zeal that first introduced them. The authority of Popes, often too easy and indulgent, has come to their aid. For what is *more foul or more impious* than these religions when they are lax? And if you turn to those that are commended and even most commended, I know not what image of Christ you will find, *unless you can so regard some cold Jewish ordinances.* It is on these they pride themselves, and on the strength of these they judge and despise others. How much more is it in accord with the sentiment of Christ to regard the whole world as one household, or as it were one convent, to think of all mankind as our brethren or fellow Canons, to hold the sacrament of baptism as the highest order of religion, and not to look where a man lives, but how well he lives.

You wish me to fix on a permanent residence; a course also suggested by advancing age.[5] And yet the wanderings of Solon and Pythagoras and Plato are commended. The Apostles were wanderers, especially Paul. St. Jerome, monk as he was, is now found at Rome, now in Syria, now in Africa or elsewhere, and in old age is still pursuing sacred Letters. I am not to be compared with him, I admit; but I have never changed my place, unless either forced by plague, or for the sake of study or health; and wherever I have lived (perhaps I shall speak too arrogantly of myself, but I will say the truth), I have been esteemed by the most admired and praised by the most approved. And there is no country, whether Spain, or Italy, or England, or Scotland[6] which has not invited me to its hospitality. If I am not approved by all, which I do not desire, I have found favor at any rate with the highest. At Rome there was not a Cardinal that did not receive me as a brother, without my soliciting any such distinction. This was especially the case with the Cardinal of St. George, the Cardinal of Bologna, Cardinal Grimani, the Cardinal of Nantes, and the present Pontiff, not to speak of Bishops, Archdeacons, and men of learning. And this honor was not rendered to wealth, which even now I do not possess and do not desire; nor to any overtures of mine, from which I have been always most averse, but only to Letters, which however derided by our countrymen, are worshipped by the Italians. In England there is not a bishop who is not pleased to receive my greet-

[5] Erasmus in July, 1514, was probably in his forty-fifth year.

[6] This mention of an invitation to Scotland recalls the intimacy of Erasmus at Siena with the Archbishop of St. Andrews, who lost his life at Flodden (9 Sept. 1513); and at Paris, in 1497, with Hector Boece. See Nichols, I, pp. 105, 147.

ing, or who would not welcome me as a guest, or as a member of his household. The King himself shortly before his father's death, when I was in Italy, wrote to me a most loving letter with his own hand;[7] he often speaks of me now with as much respect and affection as any one could possibly do, and whenever I wait upon him, he receives me with the greatest kindness, and regards me with such loving looks, that you may easily see that his sentiments are no less favorable than his words. The Queen has tried to get me to be her preceptor; and everybody knows that, if I cared to live even a few months at Court, I might heap up as many benefices as I liked. But I allow nothing to interfere with my leisure and studious labors.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England and Chancellor of the kingdom,[8] a good and learned man, treats me with as much kindness as if he were my father or my brother; and that you may understand how sincerely this is meant, he gave me a benefice of about a hundred nobles, which he afterwards, by my wish and on my resignation of the cure, changed to a pension of a hundred crowns. Beside this, he has given me in presents four hundred nobles during these few years, and that without any asking on my part. On one day he gave me a hundred and fifty nobles. From other bishops I have received above a hundred nobles, which have been offered to me with spontaneous liberality. Lord Mountjoy, a baron of this realm and formerly my pupil, gives me yearly a pension of a hundred crowns. And the Bishop of Lincoln, who is now all powerful with the King, makes magnificent promises.

[7] See Nichols, I, p. 423.
[8] William Warham.

There are two Universities here, at Oxford and Cambridge, both of which seek to have me. For I spent several months at Cambridge teaching Greek and Divinity, but without remuneration, and so I have resolved always to do. There are colleges in which there is so much religion and such a well-regulated mode of living, that, if you saw it, you would think less of any monastic rule. At London there is Dr. John Colet, dean of St. Paul's, a man who, uniting the highest learning with admirable piety, exerts a great and general influence. It is well known that he has so much affection for me, that there is no one whose society he prefers. I say nothing of a host of other personages, not wishing to annoy you by boasting or by loquacity. . . .

I have explained to you the whole scheme of my life, and what my ideas are. I am quite ready to change even this mode of life, if I see anything better. But I do not see what I can do in Holland. I know I shall not find either the climate or the food agree with me; and I shall draw all eyes upon me. I shall return old and grey to the place I left when young; I shall return an invalid. I shall exchange my studies for drinking parties. And whereas you promise your assistance in finding me a place where I may live, as you say, with a good income, I cannot think what that can be, unless you would quarter me upon some convent of nuns, where I should be a servant to women, after having declined to serve Archbishops and Kings. I do not ask for a large income, having no anxiety to be rich, but only to have as much fortune as is needed for my health and literary leisure, so that I may not be a burden to anyone.[9] . . .

[9] After the receipt of this letter, Servatius does not appear to have asked Erasmus to return to his monastery.

Part II. The Letters of Obscure Men

2. *Erasmus to Reuchlin* [*P. S. Allen, Opus Ep. Des. Erasmi,* no. 300; *F. M. Nichols, The Ep. of Er.,* no. 294.]

While I was staying in England, I received your letter, with the Bishop of Spires's judgment of acquittal, which I communicated to several learned friends, of whom there is none that fails to respect your fertile and happy genius. They laughed, and urgently asked to see the condemned book, concluding that it was something splendid from the character of its opponents. I refer especially to the Bishop of Rochester, a man of the highest integrity and a consummate theologian, and John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's in London. For my own part I had some doubt, lest you should have written something incautiously, seeing that the Bishop's sentence was expressed timidly and acquitted you of *open* heresy, until I obtained the impious articles of yours; and then I could not suppress a laugh. But when I had read that condemnation [1] so charmingly written, it was to me quite a sufficient apology to justify your acquittal; and I did wish most heartily that it might come into the hands of all the learned! When again I read your Apology composed with so much spirit and eloquence, and with such exuberance of learning,

[1] The denunciation of Reuchlin by Hoogstraten, the Inquisitor of Germany.

I seemed to be listening not to a culprit making his defence, but to a conqueror celebrating his triumph. One thing I wanted, for I will speak in a plain and friendly way. I should have liked you to be more sparing of digressions founded on commonplaces, and moreover to have abstained from downright invective. But if the former is a fault, it is the fault of a person overflowing with literary talent and erudition; and in the other matter it is hard to fix a limit to the anger of another. You will give pleasure to all the learned, if you will take the trouble to send the book to England, either to John, Bishop of Rochester, or to Colet, Dean of St. Paul's. I will also send my copy, if I can, though I have but one.

3. *Gerhard Schirrugel to Magister Ortwin Gratius.* [*Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum,* Part I, no. xxii.]

Many greetings to you in the glorious name of our Master, Who from the dead arose, and now is enthroned in heaven.

Honored sir, I would have you know that I abide here reluctantly, and it grieves me that I did not remain at Cologne with you, where I should have made better progress. You, indeed, would have been able to make me a good syllogizer, and even in some sort a poet. In Cologne folk are devout, and gladly visit the churches, and on Sundays they flock to the sermon. The arrogance of this place[2] is not to be seen there. Here the students show no deference to the professors and the professors pay no attention to the students, but let them go wherever they wish; and they wear no hoods. When they are in their cups they take God's

[2] Mayence, or Mainz.

name in vain, and blaspheme, and do many unseemly things. A little while ago, for instance, a fellow said that he did not believe the Holy Coat of Treves to be our Lord's Coat, but a lousy old rag; and he said that he did not believe that a single hair of the Blessed Virgin remained in the world. Another further said that very likely the Three Kings at Cologne were three boors from Westphalia, and that the sword and shield of St. Michael were not St. Michael's. He swore, too, that the indulgences of the Preaching Friars [Dominicans] were only fit for the jakes, and that the Friars themselves were a pack of jack-puddings, who deceived women and churls. Then I cried, "To the stake, to the stake with such a heretic!"

But he laughed in my face. Then I said, "You rascal, if you should but say such things in the ears of Doctor Hoogstraten of Cologne, the Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity!" He replied, "Hoogstraten is a vile and damnable beast," and thereupon he railed against him, and said, "John Reuchlin is an upright man, but the theologians are devils, and they have unjustly given sentence that his book, the *Eyeglass,* should be burned."

Then I answered, "Don't say that, for it is written in the eighth chapter of Ecclesiastes: 'Judge thou not against the judge, for after that is righteous he judgeth.' Don't you know that the University of Paris, where the theologians are learned and zealous and cannot err, has decided as Cologne has? Why should you fight against the universal Church?" Then he averred that the theologians of Paris were unjust judges, and that they took from the Dominicans a bribe which—so the lying rascal said—was conveyed to them by that most zealous and learned man Theodore of

Gouda, legate of the University of Cologne. Moreover he swore that the church I spoke of was not God's Church, but that of which the Psalmist spoke, "I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked." And he reviled the Doctors of Paris for all that they did; saying that the University of Paris was the mother of all foolishness, which, taking there its rise, spread into Germany and Italy, and that the University sowed broadcast superstition and folly. . . .

4. *Mammotrect*[3] *Buntemantel, Magister in the Seven Liberal Arts, sends hearty greetings to Magister Ortwin Gratius, Philosopher, Orator, Poet, Jurist, and Theologian, of discretionary Faculty.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.* Part I, no. xxxiii.]

Very conscientious Magister Ortwin, believe me, you have been mine own dear heart from the days in which I heard much discourse on Poetry from your worthiness at Cologne, where you excel all others in that art, for you are a Poet much more excellent than Buschius or Cæsarius. Moreover, you can expound Pliny and Greek Grammar.

In all confidence, therefore, I desire to disclose something to your reverence under seal of confession.

Reverend Magister, I have become enamored of a damsel here, Margaret by name, the daughter of a bell-ringer. Not long ago she sat by your own side when the parson invited your worship to the feast, and treated you with due deference; when we drank and were merry, she too pledged you in great bumpers.

[3] The *Mammotrect* (*um*) was a medieval grammar.

I love her with such passion that I am beside myself. Believe me, because of her I can neither eat nor sleep. Folk say to me, "Magister, why so pale? For the love of God quit your books; you study too much; you should seek some diversion, and drink more; you are still in your youth, and are quite able to secure a Doctor's degree and become a professor. You are a profound and able scholar, and are almost the equal of a Doctor."

But I am bashful, and cannot control my disorder. I have studied Ovid's *Of the Remedy of Love,* which I annotated at Cologne under your worthiness, with many notes and moralizations in the margin; but it is no use, for this love of mine grows from day to day.

Lately I danced with her thrice, at an evening junketing at the Mayor's house. The piper struck up the tune of "The Shepherds of Neustadt," and immediately all the dancers clasped their partners, as is customary; so I also hugged mine right lovingly, with her bosom next my heart, and tightly I squeezed her hand. Then she simpered, and said, "By my soul, Magister, you are a sweet man, and you have softer hands than the others; you must not be a priest, you must take a wife!" Then she eyed me so amorously that I believe she loves me—secretly. Her glance, in fact, wounded my heart as though an arrow had pierced it, and I went home at once with my servant, and flung myself upon my bed.

Then my mother began to weep, because she thought I was sick of the plague, and she ran with my water to Dr. Brunell, crying out, "Doctor, I beseech you by the Lord to heal my son; I will give you a fine shirt for a fee, because I made a vow that he should become a priest!" Then the physician examined the water, and said, "The patient is partly cholerical,

and partly phlegmatical; there is danger of great intumescence in his veins, with tympanies and abdominal colics from ill concoctions. He must needs have recourse to a purgative. There is a simple one, named Gyni, which grows in moist places and has a rank odor, as the Herbarius teaches: the roots of this herb you must triturate with its juice, and with this you must make a great cataplasm, and cover his paunch with it at the accustomed time, and he must lie upon his belly a whole hour, sweating profusely. And thus without a doubt his colicky pains and tympanies will abate, for there is no other medicament so effectual as this for his distemper, as has been proved in the case of many patients. But it will assuredly be proper for him first to take a cathartic of Album Graecum and radish juice—four grams of each—and all will be well."

Then came my mother, and gave me that concoction, much against my will, and I was purged five times before dawn, and I slept not at all, but all the time I ceased not to think of how I had embraced the damsel at the dance, with her breast to mine, and how she looked at me.

Now I beseech you, by all your bowels of mercy, give me a remedy for Love out of that little book of yours wherein is written "I have tried this." You once showed it to me, saying, "See, with this book I can make any woman love me!"

And unless you do this, Magister, I shall die, and for grief my mother will die too.

Heidelberg.

5. *Petermann Kachelofen, Licentiate, to Magister Ortwin Gratius most salutiferous salutations.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.*, Part I, no. xxxviii.]

You wrote to me of late from Cologne, and chided me for not writing to you, since, you averred, you read my letters with more relish than any others, inasmuch as their style is good, and they are artifically composed according to the Epistolary Rules that I learned from your worthiness in Cologne. But I may tell you that I do not always have inspiration, and subject-matter besides, such as is now mine.

You must know that a public disputation is being held here, and the Magisters and Doctors exhibit their craft and profundity in deciding, solving, and propounding questions, arguments, and problems concerning all things knowable. The Poets and Orators, too, prove themselves highly skilled and learned, and among them there is one who is tremendously proficient in that art above all the rest, and he assumes a brave title in announcing his lectures, for he alleges that he is the Poet of poets, and that besides him there is no other poet.

He has written a treatise all in verse, with a mighty fine name—what it is called I have forgotten, but I declare it treats of wroth and choler—and in that treatise he vexes many of the Magisters, and the other poets who hindered him from lecturing in the University, on account of his licentious art. The Magisters, moreover, tell him to his face that he is not so fine a poet as he boasts himself to be, and they oppose him stoutly, and prove their case by citing you, seeing that you are more deeply immersed in the poetical art. They prove too that he is not well grounded in the quantities of syllables, as the Master of Villedieu [4] determines them in his Third Book (which the fellow seems not

[4] Alexander of Villedieu wrote a grammar, often named *The Doctrinale.*

to have duly studied), and they prove their case by many arguments. *Imprimis,* by means of your name, and this in twofold fashion. First: this fellow would fain be a deeper poet than Magister Ortwin, and yet his very name will not suffer it.

Magister Ortwin manifestly has the name Gratius from the grace given him from on high (which is called grace because it is given *gratis*), for you could not compare those profound poems without that gratuitous grace given you by the divine spirit that "breatheth where it listeth." It is through your humility that you have obtained this, for "God withstandeth proud men, but to meek men he giveth grace." They who read your poetry, and understand such matters, vow that you have no peer, and marvel that this fellow can be so doltish and irreverent as to wish to excel you, when a child may see that you surpass him as the Labyrinthus[5] does the Cornutus. . . .

6. *Nikolaus Luminatoris sends to Magister Ortwin as many greetings as there be fleas and midges begotten in a year.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.,* Part I, no. xxxix.]

Magister Ortwin, most learned preceptor, I render you more thanks than I have hairs on my body, for that you counselled me to trudge to Cologne and study at Lawrence Hostel. My father was well pleased with that, and gave me ten florins; futhermore he bought me a long gown with a black hood. On the very day when I arrived at the University, and underwent initiation at the aforesaid hostel, I learned a most noteworthy thing that I would not have missed for ten silver pieces. A certain poet, one Hermann Buschius, came to

[5] A poem ascribed to Ebrard of Béthune, the author of a grammar which was attacked by the humanists.

the hostel to confer with the vice-regent on business. Thereupon the vice-regent took him by the hand, and greeted him deferentially, saying, "What is it to me that the mother of the Lord cometh to me?" But Buschius made answer, "If the Lord had a mother no fairer than I am, of a truth she was not very comely!" Thus he failed to comprehend the subtle rhetorical allegory that the vice-regent had intended by his greeting!

I trust that I shall yet learn in this benign University many things as profitable as this notable topic. To-day I bought the Statutes of the Hostel; to-morrow I must argue in an academical disputation on this theme: "Whether prime matter is an actual or potential entity."

Lawrence Hostel, Cologne.

7. *Konrad Unckebunck to Magister Ortwin Gratius.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.,* Part II, no. xix.]

I marvel greatly, reverend Magister, that my parents have sent me no money, though they know that I haven't a penny, and I have sent them twenty letters at the least. If they will send me no money, then, by the Lord, I have another plan in my head. Mark my word, I have been minded of late to bind myself under a bond to the Chamber and borrow two or three Rhenish florins, and come home and expound to them my opinion, in a form thick enough for them to feel. The devil! Do they think that I grow upon a tree, or that I can eat hay like a beast? I never have any victuals save salad, and onions, and garlic, and once in a while a dish of beans or kail, or some spinach in Italian fashion. But well I know how my

brethren at home guzzle fish and fowl and all manner of dainty dishes, and never give me a thought. But I will endure it no longer. Please tell them so, and then I will urge my master here to press forward your suit as you would have me do. . . .

8. *Heinrich Schafmaul to Magister Ortuinus Gratius many greetings.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.,* Part II, no. xxvi.]

Since before I journeyed to Court you asked me to write to you often, and propose from time to time knotty points in Theology, which you would immediately solve better than the Courticians at Rome, therefore I now write to ask your reverence what opinion you hold concerning one who on a Friday, that is on the sixth day of the week—or on any other fast-day—should eat an egg with a chicken in it?

For you must know that we were recently sitting in an inn in the *Campo dei Fiori,* having our supper, and were eating eggs, when on opening one I saw that there was a young chicken in it.

This I showed to a comrade; whereupon he said to me, "Eat it quickly, before the inn-keeper sees it, for if he does, you will have to pay a Caroline or a Julius for a fowl. For it is the rule of the house that once the landlord has put anything on the table you must pay for it; he won't take it back. And if he sees that there is a young fowl in that egg, he will say 'Pay me for that fowl!' Little or big, it is all the same."

In a second I gulped down the egg, chicken and all.

And then I remembered that it was Friday!

Whereupon I said to my crony, "You have made me commit a mortal sin, in eating flesh on the sixth day of the week!"

But he averred that it was not a mortal sin, nor even a venial one, seeing that such a chickling is accounted merely as an egg, until it is born.

He told me, too, that it is just the same in the case of cheese, in which there are sometimes worms, as there are in cherries, peas, and new beans; yet all these may be eaten on Fridays, and even on Apostolic Virgils. But innkeepers are such rascals that they call them flesh, to get more money.

Then I departed, and thought the matter over.

And by the Lord, Master Ortwin, I am in a mighty quandary, and know not what to do.

I would willingly seek counsel of one of the Courticians, but they are not devout men.

It seems to me that these young fowls in eggs are flesh, because their substance is formed and fashioned into the limbs and body of an animal, and possesses a vital principle.

It is different in the case of worms in cheese, because worms are accounted fish, as I learned from a physician who is also skilled in Natural Philosophy.

Most earnestly I entreat you to solve the question I have propounded. For if you hold that the sin is mortal, I want to obtain absolution here, before I return to Germany.

You must know, too, that Doctor Jakob Hoogstraten has received a thousand florins through the bankers, and I

trust he will gain the day, and that the devil will overthrow John Reuchlin and the rest of the Poets and Jurists, because they want to withstand the Church of God—that is, the Theologians, on whom the Church is founded, according to Christ's words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."

And so I commend you to the Lord. Farewell.
Rome.

9. *Johann Kalb to Magister Ortwin Gratius amicable greetings.* [*Ep. Obsc. Vir.,* Part II, no. xlviii.]

Honorable and Reverend Magister, I would have you know that I marvel greatly how it happens that you importune me in continually bidding me to send you "some news." You are endlessly craving for news, notwithstanding that I have other business to attend to, and therefore cannot occupy myself with gossip; for I must needs run hither and thither in canvassing, lest I miscarry in my candidature, and fail to obtain the benefice.

Nevertheless, I will write to you this once, to satisfy you, so that, henceforth, you may leave me in peace with your "news!"

You have doubtless heard that the Pope had a huge beast called Elephant, and held it in great honor, and mightily loved it. And now I would have you know that this beast is dead. When it was ill the Pope fell into great grief, and he summoned a host of physicians, and said, "If it be possible, cure my Elephant for me." Thereupon they bestirred themselves, and cast its water, and gave it a cathartic that cost five hundred golden crowns. But the

bowels of Elephant were not moved by it, and so it died. Sorely the Pope grieves for Elephant, for whom, they say, he would give a thousand ducats.

In fact it was a marvelous brute, and it had a great abundance of long snout; and when it saw the Pope it would kneel to him, and cry in a terrible voice, "Bar, bar, bar!" There is, I suppose, not a beast like it in the whole world.

The rumor goes that the King of France and King Charles have made a treaty of peace for many years, and have exchanged oaths. But some think this peace is but politic, and will not long endure. I don't know if this is true, nor do I care much. For when I come to Germany, I shall betake me to my parsonage, and spend happy days. There I shall keep flocks of geese and hens and ducks, and I shall have in my stable five or six cows to yield me milk with which to make cheese and butter. And I shall keep a cook who can turn her hand to such work. She must be of ripe years, for if she were young she might sorely tempt me, and I might fall into sin. She will spin for me, and I will buy the flax for her. I shall keep two or three pigs, and fatten them to furnish me with good bacon. Before all things I shall keep in my house a great store of victuals. Once a year I shall kill an ox and sell half to the country-folk, and cure the rest in the reek. And behind the house there is a garden where I shall sow garlic, and onions and parsley; with pot-herbs, turnips, and the like. Then in winter I shall sit in my chamber and study how to hold forth to my flock, out of the *Paratus,* or the Simple Sermons, or even out of the Bible, so that I may become practised in preaching. But in summer I shall go fishing, or dig in my

garden; and I shall take no heed of wars, for I shall live my own life, and preach sermons and read mass, not heeding those worldly concerns that bring damnation to the soul. Farewell.

The Court of Rome.

Part III. The Colloquies

10. *A Dialogue by Anthony and Adolph.* [Erasmus, *Opera,* Leyden ed., I, 712–715.]

THE SHIPWRECK

A.[1] This is a dreadful story that you are telling. Is that sailing? God forbid that any such idea should come into my head.

B.[2] Indeed, what I have related is mere child's play compared with what you are about to hear.

A. I have heard more than enough of mishaps. I shudder while you narrate them, as though I myself were present at the danger.

B. Indeed, to me past struggles are pleasing. That night something happened which almost put the captain at his wits' end.

A. What I pray?

B. The moon was bright that night, and one of the sailors was standing in the topmast (for so it is called, I believe), keeping a lookout for land. A globe of fire appeared beside him. It is considered by sailors to be an evil omen if the fire be single, a good omen if it be double. In ancient times these were thought to be Castor and Pollux.

[1] A. stands for Anthony.
[2] B. stands for Adolph.

A. What have they to do with sailors? One of them was a horseman, the other a boxer.

B. Well, this is the view of the poets. The captain who was sitting at the helm began to speak. "Mate," said he (for sailors address each other in this manner), "do you see what is beside you?" "I see," he replied, "and I hope it may be lucky." Soon the fiery globe descended along the rigging and rolled to the captain.

A. Was he paralyzed with fear?

B. Sailors are accustomed to strange sights. The globe stopped there a while, then rolled along the side of the vessel and disappeared down through the middle of the deck. About noon the storm began to rage with great fury. Have you ever seen the Alps?

A. Yes, I have.

B. Those mountains are warts compared with the waves of the sea. When we were lifted up on the crest of a wave, we might have touched the moon with our fingers. As often as we went down between the billows, we seemed to be going directly to the infernal regions, the earth opening to receive us.

A. Madmen to trust themselves to the sea!

B. The sailors struggled in vain against the tempest, and at length the captain, quite pale, came toward us.

A. That pallor presages some great evil.

B. "Friends," says he, "I have lost control of my ship. The winds have conquered me, and nothing remains but to put our trust in God, and to prepare for the end."

A. A truly Scythian speech!

B. "But first," says he, "we shall relieve the ship of her cargo. Necessity, a stern mistress, commands this. It is better

to save our lives, with the loss of our goods, than to perish along with our goods." The truth of this was evident to us; and many boxes of precious goods were thrown into the sea.

A. This was indeed a loss!

B. There was a certain Italian who had been upon an embassy to the king of Scotland; he had a box full of silver and gold, plates, rings, cloth, and silk garments.

A. Would he not settle with the sea?

B. No; he wished either to perish with his beloved wealth, or to be saved along with it; and so he refused.

A. What did the captain say?

B. "So far as we are concerned," says he, "you are welcome to perish with your goods; but it is not right that we should all be endangered for the sake of your box, and rather than that we will throw you headlong into the sea, along with your box."

A. A speech worthy of a sailor.

B. So the Italian also threw over his goods, with many an oath, regretting that he had trusted his life to so barbarous an element. A little later the winds, in no wise softened by our offerings, broke the rigging and tore the sails into shreds.

A. Too bad! Too bad!

B. Again the skipper approaches us.

A. With further information?

B. He greets us: "Friends, the time has come that everybody should commend himself to God and prepare for death." When some of the passengers who had some knowledge of the sea asked him how many hours he thought he

could keep afloat, he said he could not say for certain, but that it would not be above three hours.

A. This news was more serious than the former.

B. With these words he ordered all ropes to be severed and the mast cut with a saw close to the deck, and to be thrown into the sea together with the spars.

A. Why?

B. Because the sails, being torn to pieces, were a burden rather than a help. All our hope was in the helm.

A. What were the passengers doing in the meantime?

B. There you might have seen a wretched spectacle. The sailors, singing *"SALVE, REGINA,"* implored the Virgin Mother, calling her star of the sea, queen of heaven, ruler of the world, harbor of safety, and flattering her with many other titles, which the Bible nowhere attributes to her.

A. What has she to do with the sea, who never sailed, so far as I know?

B. Venus formerly had the care of sailors, because she was supposed to have been born of the sea. Since she has ceased to care for them, the Virgin Mother has been substituted for her: as a mother and not as a virgin.

A. You are joking.

B. Some fell down upon the decks and worshipped the sea, pouring oil upon the waves, flattering them as we used to flatter an angry prince.

A. What did they say?

B. "O most merciful sea! O most generous sea! O most wealthy sea! Have pity, save us!" Many things of this sort they sang to the deaf sea.

A. Ridiculous superstition! What were the others doing?

B. Some were occupied with sea-sickness; but most of them offered vows. Among them was a certain Englishman, who promised mountains of gold to our Lady of Walsingham, if only he might reach land alive. Some promised much to the wood of the cross in a certain place; others to the same wood in another place. The same was done for the Virgin Mary, who reigns in many places; and they think the vow is of no avail, unless one names the place.

A. Absurd! As if the saints did not dwell in heaven.

B. Some vowed to be Carthusians. One promised to go to James of Compostella with bare head and feet, his body covered only with an iron coat of mail, and begging his food.

A. Did nobody mention Christopher?

B. I could not help laughing when I heard one with a loud voice (lest he should not be heard) promise Christopher in the high church at Paris, a mountain rather than a statue, a wax candle as big as he himself. While he was shouting this at the top of his voice, with now and then an additional emphasis, an acquaintance nudged him with his elbow and said, "Take care what you promise; for if you sell all your goods at auction, you will not be able to pay." Then said he in a lower voice, lest Christopher should hear: "Hold your tongue, fool; do you think I am in earnest? When once I reach land, I will not give him a tallow candle."

A. What a blockhead! I imagine he was a Hollander.

B. No, but he was a Zeelander.[3]

A. I am surprised that nobody thought of Paul the Apostle. He himself sailed, and when the ship was wrecked, leaped

[3] Zeeland and Holland were Dutch counties.

ashore; and he learned through misfortune to succor the unfortunate.

B. There was no mention of Paul.

A. Did they pray meanwhile?

B. Earnestly. One sang *"SALVE, REGINA,"* another the apostles' creed. Some had special prayers, like charms, against danger.

A. How religious men are in times of affliction! In prosperity neither God nor saint comes into our head. What were you doing all this time? Did you offer vows to none of the saints?

B. Not one.

A. Why not?

B. Because I do not bargain with the saints. For what else is it than a contract: "I will give this if you will do that; I will give you a wax candle, if I swim out of this; I will go to Rome, if you will save me."

A. But did you not implore the protection of some saint?

B. Not even that.

A. Why not?

B. Because Heaven is a large place. If I commend myself to some saint, St. Peter for example, who is most likely to hear me first of all, since he stands at the door; before he goes to God and explains my case I should have perished.

A. What did you do, then?

B. I went straight to the Father himself, saying: "Our Father who art in heaven." None of the saints hears sooner than He, nor gives more willingly what is asked.

A. But in the meanwhile did not your conscience cry out against you? Were you not afraid to call him Father

whom you have offended with so many transgressions?

B. To tell the truth, my conscience did terrify me a little; but presently I gathered courage, thinking, there is no father so angry with his son, but, if he sees him in danger, in a river or a lake, would seize him by the hair and draw him out upon the bank. Among them all no one behaved more quietly than a certain woman who had a baby in her arms, which she was nursing.

A. What did she do?

B. She was the only one who did not shout or weep or promise. Embracing her child, she prayed silently. In the meantime the ship was struck by a big wave, and the captain, fearing lest it should go to pieces, bound it fore and aft with cables.

A. What a miserable makeshift!

B. Then an aged priest, sixty years old, whose name was Adam, comes forward. Casting off his clothes even to his shirt and his leather stockings, he ordered that we should prepare ourselves in a similar manner for swimming; and standing thus in the middle of the ship he preached to us out of Gerson the five truths concerning the usefulness of confession, exhorting us all to prepare ourselves for life or death. There was also a Dominican to whom those who wished confessed.

A. What did you do?

B. Seeing that confusion reigned everywhere, I confessed silently to God, condemning my unrighteousness and imploring his mercy.

A. Where would you have gone, if you had died thus?

B. I left that to God as judge; nor was I disposed to be my own judge; yet in the meantime I was not without some

hope. While these things were going on, the sailor returns to us weeping. "Let every one prepare himself," says he, "for the ship will not last a quarter of an hour." For it was badly broken, and the sea was rushing in. A little later the sailor informed us that he saw a church tower, and advised us to pray to the saint for aid, whoever might be the patron of that church. All fall upon their knees and pray to the unknown saint.

A. If you had called him by name perhaps he might have heard you.

B. He was unknown to us. Meanwhile the captain steers the ship, shattered as it was, and leaking at every seam, and evidently ready to fall to pieces, had it not been bound with cables.

A. A sad condition of affairs.

B. We came so near the shore that the inhabitants of the place saw our danger; and running in crowds to the beach, they held up their coats and put their hats upon lances, to attract our attention; and they raised their arms, to show that they were sorry for us.

A. I am anxious to know what happened.

B. The sea had already invaded the whole ship, so that we were likely to be no safer in the ship than in the sea.

A. Then you were obliged to flee to the holy anchor?

B. Nay, to the miserable one. The sailors bail out the boat and lower it into the sea. All attempt to crowd into it, and the sailors remonstrate vigorously, saying that the boat is not able to hold such a crowd; that each one should lay hold of whatever he could find and take to swimming. There was no opportunity for deliberation. One took an oar, another a boat-hook, another a tub, another a plank;

and all took to the waves, each one resting upon his means of salvation.

A. In the meantime what became of that poor woman who alone did not cry out?

B. She reached land first.

A. How was that possible?

B. We placed her upon a wide board, and tied her on it so that she could not very well fall off. We gave her a paddle in her hand which she might use instead of an oar, and, wishing her well, we set her adrift, pushing her forward with a pole, so that she might float wide of the ship, from which there was danger. She held her baby with her left hand and paddled with her right.

A. What a courageous woman!

B. When nothing was left, some one pulled down a wooden image of the Virgin Mother, now rotten and hollowed out by the rats, and embracing it, began to swim.

A. Did the boat arrive safe?

B. They were the first ones to be lost.

A. How did that happen?

B. Before it could get clear of the ship it tipped and was overturned.

A. How badly managed! What then?

B. While watching the others I nearly perished myself.

A. How so?

B. Because nothing remained for me to swim upon.

A. Corks would have been of use there.

B. Just at this time I would rather have had some cheap cork than a golden candlestick. Finally, as I was looking about, it occurred to me that the stump of the mast would be of use to me; but as I could not get it out alone, I got

a companion to help me. We both threw ourselves upon it and so committed ourselves to the sea, I upon the right end, he upon the left. While we were thus tossing about, the sea chaplain threw himself upon the middle, between our shoulders. He was a stout man. We cried out: "Who is this third man? He will cause us all to perish!" He, on the other hand, mildly replied: "Be of good cheer; there is room enough. God will be with us."

A. Why did he come so late?

B. He was to have been in the boat with the Dominican, for they all had great respect for him; but although they had confessed to one another on the ship, they had forgotten something (I know not what), wherefore they began confessing again at the ship's rail, and one laid his hand upon the other. Meanwhile the boat is turned over, as Adam himself told me.

A. What became of the Dominican?

B. He, the same one told me, implored the saints' help, put off his clothes and took to swimming all naked.

A. What saints did he invoke?

B. Dominic, Thomas, Vincent; but he relied most upon Catherine of Sens.

A. Did he say nothing of Christ?

B. Not a word, according to the priest.

A. He would have done better if he had not put off his holy cowl; with that off, how could Catherine of Sens recognize him? But go on about yourself.

B. While we were tossing about near the ship, which rolled hither and thither at the mercy of the waves, the helm broke the thigh of the man who held the left end of our float, and he was knocked off. The priest prayed for his

eternal rest, and succeeded to his place, urging me to hold courageously to my end and move my feet actively. In the meanwhile we swallowed a great deal of salt water. Neptune had mixed for us not only a salt bath, but a salt drink. The priest, however, soon had a remedy for that.

A. What, I pray?

B. Every time a wave came toward us, he turned the back of his head to it with his mouth firmly closed.

A. You say he was a stout old man?

B. Swimming thus for some time we had made considerable progress when the priest, who was a man of unusual height, said: "Be of good cheer; I feel bottom." Not having dared to hope for such happiness, I replied: "We are yet too far from shore to hope to find bottom." "No," he said, "I feel the ground with my feet." "It is," I rejoined, "some of the boxes, perhaps, which the sea has thrown down here." "No," said he, "I plainly feel the earth by scratching with my toes." We swam on for some time longer, and he felt bottom again. "You must do," he said, "what you think is best. I will give you the whole mast and trust myself to the bottom"; and at the same time waiting for the waves to flow outward, he went forward as rapidly as he could. When the waves came again upon him, holding firmly to his knees with both hands he met the wave, sinking beneath it as sea-gulls and ducks are accustomed to do; and when the wave again receded he sprang up and ran. Seeing that this succeeded in his case, I did the same. Then some of the strongest of those who stood upon the beach, and those most used to the waves, fortified themselves against the force of the waves with long poles stretched between them, so that the outermost held

out a pole to the swimmer; and when he had grasped it, the whole line moved shorewards and so he was drawn safely on dry land. Some were saved in this way.

A. How many?

B. Seven; but of these, two fainted with the heat, when placed before the fire.

A. How many were there in the ship?

A. Fifty-eight.

A. O cruel sea! At least it might have been content with the tithes, which suffice for the priests. Did it return so few out of so great a number?

B. We were surprisingly well treated by the people, who most cheerfully furnished us with everything, lodging, fire, food, clothes, and provisions for our homeward journey.

A. What people were they?

B. Hollanders.

A. No people are more civil, although they are surrounded with savage nations. You will not go to sea again, I take it?

B. Not if God keeps my mind sound.

A. And as for me, I would rather hear such tales than experience them.

11. *A Dialogue between Robert and William.* [Erasmus, *Opera,* Leyden ed., I, 715–718.]

THE INNS

A.[4] Why do so many people stop at Lyons for two or three days? As for me, when I start upon a journey I do not rest until I reach my destination.

B.[5] Indeed, I wonder how any one can be got away from the place at all.

A. Why?

B. Because that is the place from which the companions of Ulysses could not have been drawn. The Sirens are there. No one is treated better in his own home than there at an inn.

A. What do they do?

B. The women are very handsome there, and one of them is always standing near the table to divert the guests with wit and fun. First the mistress of the house came to us, and bade us welcome. Then came the daughter, a fine woman, merry and charming, so that she might have amused Cato himself. Nor do they talk to their guests as if they were strangers, but as if they were old acquaintances.

A. Yes, I admit that French people are very civil.

B. But since they could not be present all the time (the business of the house had to be attended to and the other guests had to be greeted), a girl well supplied with jokes attended us during the whole meal. She was quite able to

[4] A. stands for Robert.
[5] B. stands for William.

repay all the jesters in their own coin. She kept the stories going until the daughter returned. The mother, by the way, was somewhat elderly.

A. But what sort of fare did you have with all this? For the stomach is not filled with stories.

B. Fine! Indeed, I wonder how they can entertain guests so cheaply. Then too, after dinner they divert the guests with pleasant conversation, lest they should feel bored. It seemed to me that I was at home, not travelling.

A. How about the sleeping accommodations?

B. Even there we were attended by girls, laughing, romping and playing; they asked us if we had any soiled clothes, washed them for us and brought them back. What more can I say? We saw nothing but women and girls, except in the stables; and even there they burst in occasionally. They treat departing guests as affectionately as if they were all brothers or near relatives.

A. Very likely such manners suit the French; as for me, the customs of Germany please me more. They are more manly.

B. I never happened to visit Germany; so tell me how the Germans entertain a guest.

A. I cannot say what happens in all parts of Germany, but I will relate what I have seen. Upon the arrival of the guest nobody greets him, lest they should seem to court him for they consider that mean and unworthy of German dignity and gravity. When you have shouted yourself hoarse, finally someone puts his head out of the window of the stove-room (for they live there up to the middle of the summer), just as a snail pokes its head out of its shell. You have to ask him if you may be entertained there. If

he says nothing, you understand that room will be made for you. To your inquiries, with a wave of his hand, he indicates where the stables are. There you are permitted to take care of your horse as you choose; for no servant lifts a finger. If the tavern is a large one, a servant will show you the stables and a rather inconvenient place for your horse. They keep the better places for the noblemen, who, as they pretend, are expected. If you find fault with anything, you are told at once that you are at liberty to hunt another tavern. In the cities it is difficult to get any hay, even a little, and it is almost as dear as oats. When your horse is provided for, you go just as you are to the stove-room, boots, baggage and mud. There is one room for all comers.

B. Among the French they take the guests to bed rooms, where they may change their clothes, bathe and warm themselves, or even take a nap, if they please.

A. Well, there is no such thing here. In the stove-room you take off your boots and put on slippers. If you like, you change your shirt; you hang your clothes, wet with rain, against the stove; and you sit by it yourself, in order to get dry. There is water ready if you care to wash your hands, but it is generally so dirty that you have to seek more water to wash off that ablution.

B. I cannot admire such manly people.

A. Even if you arrive at four in the afternoon, you cannot get your supper before nine, and sometimes ten.

B. Why is that?

A. They serve nothing until they see all the guests assembled, in order that the same effort may serve for all.

B. They have an eye to labor-saving.

A. You are right. And thus very often between eighty and a hundred persons are assembled in the same stove-room, footmen, horsemen, tradesmen, sailors, coachmen, farmers, boys, women, healthy people and sick people.

B. That is in truth a community.

A. One is combing his head, another wiping the perspiration from his face, another cleaning his winter shoes or boots, another reeks of garlic. What more could you desire? Here is no less confusion of tongue and of persons than there was once in the tower of Babel. But if they see a foreigner who shows some evidence of distinction in dress, they are all interested in him, and stare at him as if he were some animal from Africa. Even after they are at the table, they turn their heads to get a look, and neglect their meals rather than lose sight of him.

B. At Rome, Paris, and Venice there is no such gazing.

A. Remember, it is a mortal sin to call for anything. When the evening is far advanced and no more guests are expected, an old servant appears, with gray beard, cropped head, a savage look and shabby clothes.

B. It was necessary that such should be cup-bearers to the Roman Cardinals. . . .

A. Well, after all are seated, the grim servant comes out and counts his company. By and by he returns and sets before each guest a wooden dish and a spoon of the same kind of silver; then a glass and a little piece of bread. Each one polishes up his utensils in a leisurely way while the porridge is cooking. And thus they sit not uncommonly for upwards of an hour.

B. Does no guest call for food in the meantime?

A. No one who is acquainted with the temper of the

country. At length wine is served, and wine that is far from being tasteless! Those who water their wine ought to drink no other kind, it is so thin and sharp. But if any guest wants better wine, offering to pay extra for it, they will give him a look as if they wished to murder him. If he insists upon it they answer that a great many counts and margraves have lodged there and none of them has complained of the quality of the wine; if it does not suit him, why then, let him go to another tavern, for they look upon their noblemen as the only men of importance, and exhibit their coats of arms everywhere. By this time the guests get a crust to throw to their barking stomachs. By and by the dishes come on in great array. The first usually consists of pieces of bread soaked in meat-broth, or, if it be fish-day, in a broth of herbs. After this comes another kind of broth, then some kind of warmed-up meat or salt fish. Again the porridge is brought on, then some more substantial food, until, when the stomach is well tamed, they serve up roast meat or boiled fish, which is not to be despised. But here they are sparing, and take the dishes away quickly. In this way they diversify the entertainment, like comedians who mix choruses with their scenes, taking care that the last act shall be the best.

B. This is indeed the mark of a good poet.

A. Moreover, it would be an unpardonable offense if anybody in the meantime should say: "Take away this dish; nobody cares for it." You must sit there through the prescribed time, which they measure, I suppose, with an hour-glass. At last, the bearded fellow, or the inn-keeper himself, who wears no better clothes than the servants, comes in

and asks if there is anything wanted. Presently some better wine is brought in. They admire him the most who drinks the most; but although he is the greater consumer he pays no more than he who drinks least.

B. A curious people, indeed!

A. The result is that sometimes there are those who consume twice the value in wine of what they pay for the whole meal. But before I end my account of this entertainment, it is wonderful what a noise and confusion of voices arises, when all have begun to grow warm with drink. It is unnecessary to say that the riot is universal. So-called jesters thrust themselves in everywhere, and although there is no kind of human beings more despicable, yet you would scarcely believe how the Germans are pleased with them. They sing, shout, dance, and jump, so that the stove seems ready to fall. No one can hear another speak. But it seems to please them, and you are obliged to sit there, whether you will or not, until midnight.

A. Now you must finish the entertainment; for I am also worn out with the length of it.

B. Very well. When at last the cheese, which hardly pleases them unless rotten and full of worms, has been taken away, the bearded fellow appears, bearing a trencher on which are drawn with chalk some circles and semi-circles, and he lays it upon the table, so silent, meanwhile, and sad, that you would say he was some Charon. Then they who comprehend the meaning of this lay down their money, one after another, until the trencher is filled. Then having observed who has contributed, he counts it silently; and if nothing is wanting he nods his head.

B. What if there should be too much?

A. Perhaps he would return it. As a matter of fact, this is sometimes done.

B. Does nobody ever complain about the counting as unjust?

A. Nobody who is prudent. For he would hear at once: "What sort of a fellow are you? You are paying no more than the others!"

B. This is certainly a frank kind of people you are telling about.

A. And if anybody, weary with his journey, asks to go to bed soon after supper, he is ordered to wait until the rest also go to bed.

B. I seem to see a Platonic city.

A. Then each is shown to his rest, and it is truly nothing more than a bed room; for there is nothing there but a bed, and nothing else that you can use or steal.

B. Is there cleanliness?

A. Just as at dinner; linen washed six months ago, perhaps.

B. In the meantime what had become of the horses?

A. They were treated according to the same method as the men.

B. But do you get the same accommodations everywhere?

A. Sometimes more courteous, sometimes harsher than I have told you; but on the whole it is as I have said.

B. How would you like me to tell you how guests are treated in that part of Italy which is called Lombardy, or in Spain, or in England and in Wales? For the English have assimilated in part the French and in part the Ger-

man customs, being a mixture of these two nations. The Welsh boast that they are the original English.

A. I should like you to tell me, for I have never had occasion to see them.

B. At present I have not time, for the sailor told me to meet him at three o'clock, or I should be left behind; and he has my baggage. Some other time we shall have an opportunity of chatting to our hearts' content.

THE SOURCES

Part IV. The Praise of Folly

[Folly is accorded the highest praise, for without Folly the human race would be quickly extinguished. Only foolish people get married and only they are willing to bring up children. Moreover, the only men who can conduct a successful government or a thriving business are those who serve Folly. The worst rulers in fact are philosophers; Plato in particular would have made a very bad statesman. The arts and the professions also are greatly indebted to Folly, because medicine, law, and refined society are based largely on hyprocrisy and deception. The happiest people are idiots and fools; scholars are usually sickly and pale, but stupid men possess healthy bodies. There are also many forms of superstition which owe their popularity to Folly. The invocation of saints, the empty formalism connected with religious observances, the reliance on relics, beads, and indulgences, and the dependence on ready-made pardons are satirized. Among the greatest fools are the scientists, grammarians, and theologians. Most stupid, however, are the monks, whose indolence, ignorance, immorality, and greed are thoroughly exposed. The higher clergy and the most exalted rulers in the state also receive much criticism. It is especially worth noting how bitterly the popes, cardinals, and bishops are attacked, and how the sacramental system

of the Church is contrasted with the simple rites which prevailed in the primitive Christian Church.]

THE PRAISE OF FOLLY

An oration of feigned matter, spoken by FOLLY *in her own person*

However slightly I am esteemed in the common vogue of the world, (for I well know how disingenuously Folly is decried, even by those who are themselves the greatest fools,) yet it is from my influence alone that the whole universe receives her ferment of mirth and jollity: of which this may be urged as a convincing argument, in that as soon as I appeared to speak before this numerous assembly, all their countenances were gilded over with a lively sparkling pleasantness: you soon welcomed me with so encouraging a look, you spurred me on with so cheerful a hum that truly in all appearance you seem now flushed with a good dose of reviving nectar, when as just before you sat drowsy and melancholy, as if you had lately come out of some hermit's cell.

But as it is usual that as soon as the sun peeps from her eastern bed, and draws back the curtains of the darksome night; or as when, after a hard winter, the restorative spring breathes a more enlivening air, nature forthwith changes her apparel, and all things seem to renew their age; so at the first sight of me you all unmask, and appear in more lively colors. That therefore which expert orators can scarcely effect by all their little artifices of eloquence, to wit, securing the undivided attention of their auditors, this

a bare look from me has commanded. The reason why I appear in this odd kind of garb, you shall soon be informed of, if for so short a while you will have but the patience to lend me an ear; yet not such a one as you are wont to hearken with to your reverend preachers, but as you listen withal to mountebanks, buffoons and merry-andrews; in short, such as formerly were fastened to Midas, as a punishment for his affront to the god Pan.

For I am now in a humor to act awhile the sophist, yet not of that sort who undertake the drudgery of tyrannizing over school boys, and teach a more than womanish knack of brawling; but in imitation of those ancient ones, who to avoid the scandalous epithet of wise, preferred this title of sophists; the task of these was to celebrate the worth of gods and heroes. Prepare therefore to be entertained with a panegyric, yet not upon Hercules, Solon, or any other grandee, but on myself, that is, upon Folly.

And here I value not their censure that pretend it is foppish and affected for any person to praise himself: yet let it be as silly as they please, if they will but allow it needful: and indeed what is more befitting than that Folly should be the trumpet of her own praise, and dance after her own pipe? For who can set me forth better than myself; or who can pretend to be so well acquainted with my condition?

And yet farther, I may safely urge that all this is no more than the same with what is done by several seemingly great and wise men, who with a new-fashioned modesty employ some paltry orator or scribbling poet, whom they bribe to flatter them with some high-flown character, that shall consist of mere lies and shams; and yet the per-

sons thus extolled shall bristle up, and, peacock-like, bespread their plumes, while the impudent parasite magnifies the poor wretch to the skies, and proposes him as a complete pattern of all virtues, from each of which he is yet as far distant as heaven itself from hell: what is all this in the meanwhile but the tricking up a daw in stolen feathers; a laboring to change the black-a-moor's hue, and the drawing on a pigmy's frock over the shoulders of a giant?

Lastly, I verify the old observation that allows him a right of praising himself, who has nobody else to do it for him: for really, I cannot but admire that ingratitude, shall I term it, or blockishness of mankind, when they all willingly pay me their utmost regard, and freely acknowledge their respective obligations; that notwithstanding this there should have been none so grateful or polite as to have bestowed on me a commendatory oration, especially when there have not been wanting such as at a great expense of sweat and loss of sleep, have in elaborate speeches given high praise to tyrants, agues, flies, baldness and similar trumperies.

I shall entertain you with a hasty and unpremeditated, but so much the more natural discourse. My venting it *ex tempore,* I would not have you think proceeds from any principles of vain glory by which ordinary orators square their attempts, who (as it is easy to observe) when they have delivered a speech that has taken thirty years to conceive, nay, perhaps at last none of their own, yet they will swear they wrote it in a great hurry, and upon very short warning: whereas the reason of my not being provided beforehand is only because it was always my humor constantly to speak that which lies uppermost. Next, let no one

be so fond as to imagine that I should so far confine my invention to the method of other pleaders, as first to define, and then divide my subject, *i. e.*, myself. For it is equally hazardous to attempt to crowd her within the narrow limits of a definition whose nature is of so diffusive an extent, or to mangle and disjoin that in the adoration whereof all nations unitedly concur. Besides, to what purpose is it to lay down a definition for a faint resemblance and mere shadow of me, while appearing here personally, you may view me in a more certain light? And if your eyesight fail not, you may at first blush discern me to be she whom the Greeks term *Moria,* the Latins *stultitia.*

But why need I have been so impertinent as to have told you this, as if my very looks did not sufficiently betray what I am; or supposing any are so credulous as to take me for some sage matron or goddess of wisdom, as if a single glance from me would not immediately correct their mistake, while my visage, the exact reflex of my soul, would supply and supersede the trouble of any other confessions; for I appear always in my natural colors and in an unartificial dress, and never let my face pretend one thing and my heart conceal another; nay, in all things I am so true to my principles that I cannot be so much as counterfeited, even by those who challenge the name of wits, yet indeed are no better than jackanapes tricked up in gawdy clothes, and asses strutting in lions' skins; and however cunningly they carry it, their long ears appear, and betray what they are. . . .

That I may not be taxed as presumptuous in borrowing the title of a goddess, I tell you now what obliging favors I everywhere bestow, and how largely my jurisdiction extends: for if, as one has ingenuously noted, to be a god is no

other than to be a benefactor to mankind; and they have been thought deservedly deified to have invented the use of wine, corn, or any other convenience for the well-being of mortals, why may not I justly bear the van among the whole troop of gods, who in all, and toward all, exert an unparalleled bounty and beneficence?

For instance, what can be more dear and precious than life itself? And yet for this are none indebted, save to me alone.

For it is neither the spear of thoroughly-begotten Pallas, nor the buckler of cloud-gathering Jove that multiplies and propagates mankind, but that prime father of the universe who at a displeasing nod makes heaven itself to tremble, he (I say) must lay aside his frightful ensigns of majesty and put away that grim aspect with which he makes the other gods quake, and, stage player-like, must lay aside his usual character, if he would do that from which he cannot refrain, *i. e.,* getting children. The next place to the gods is challenged by the Stoics; but give me one as stoical as ill-nature can make him, and if I do not prevail on him to part with his beard, that bush of wisdom, (though no other ornament than that which nature in more ample manner has given to goats,) yet at least he shall lay by his gravity, smooth up his brow, relinquish his rigid tenets, and in spite of prejudice become sensible of some passion in wanton sport and dallying.

In a word, this dictator of wisdom shall be glad to take Folly for his diversion, if ever he would arrive at the honor of a father. . . .

Let us examine the case more closely. Who knows not that the first scene of infancy is far the most pleasant and

delightful? What then is it in children that makes us so kiss, hug, and play with them, and that the bloodiest enemy can scarcely have the heart to hurt them, but their innocence and Folly, of which nature out of providence did purposely compound and blend their tender infancy, that by a frank return of pleasure they might make some sort of amends for their parents' trouble, and give in exchange as it were for the discharge of a future education? The next advance from childhood is youth, and how favorably is this dealt with; how kind, courteous, and respectful are all to it, and how ready to become serviceable upon all occasions? And whence does it reap this happiness? Whence indeed, but from me only, by whose procurement it is furnished with little of wisdom, and so with less disquiet? And when once lads begin to grow up, and attempt to act as men, their prettiness soon decays, their briskness flags, their humors stagnate, their jollity ceases, and their blood grows cold; and the farther they proceed in years, the more they grow backward in the enjoyment of themselves, till waspish old age comes on, a burden to itself as well as to others; and it is so heavy and oppressive that none would bear the weight of it unless out of pity for their sufferings. I again intervene, and lend a helping-hand, assisting them at a dead lift, in the same method the poets feign their gods to succor dying men, by transforming them into new creatures, which I do by bringing them back, after they have one foot in the grave, to their infancy again; so that there is a great deal of truth couched in that old proverb, *Once an old man and twice a child.*

Now if any one be curious to understand what course I take to effect this alteration, my method is this: I bring

them to my well of forgetfulness, (the fountain of which is in the Fortunate Islands, and the river Lethe in hell is but a small stream of it), and when they have there filled their bellies full, and washed down care, they become young again. But, you say, they merely dote, and play the fool. Why yes, this is what I mean by growing young again, for what else is it to be a child than to be a fool and an idiot? It is this that makes that age so acceptable, for who does not consider it somewhat ominous to see a boy endowed with the discretion of a man? And therefore for the curbing of precocity we have a disparaging proveb, *Soon ripe, soon rotten.* And further, who would keep company or have anything to do with such an old blade, if, after the wear and harrowing of so many years he should yet continue of as clear a head and sound a judgment as he had at any time in his middle-age? Therefore it is great kindness of me that old men grow fools, since it is hereby only that they are freed from such vexations as would torment them if they were more wise: they can drink briskly, bear up stoutly, and lightly pass over such infirmities as a far stronger constitution could scarcely master. Sometimes, with the old fellow in Plautus, they are brought back to their horn-book again, to learn to spell their fortune in love. Most wretched would they needs be if they had but wit enough to be sensible of their hard condition; but by my assistance they carry off all well, and to their respective friends prove themselves good, sociable, jolly companions. Thus Homer makes aged Nestor famed for a smooth oily-tongued orator, while the delivery of Achilles was but rough, harsh, and hesitant; and the same poet elsewhere tells us of old men that sat on the walls, and spoke with a great deal of flourish and elegance. And in this

point indeed they surpass children, who are pretty forward in a soft, innocent prattle, but otherwise are too much tongue-tied, and want the other's most acceptable embellishment of a perpetual talkativeness. Add to this that old men love to be playing with children, and children delight as much in them, to verify the proverb, that *Birds of a feather flock together*. And indeed what difference can be discerned between them, but that the one is more furrowed with wrinkles, and has seen a little more of the world than the other? For otherwise their whitish hair, their want of teeth, their smallness of stature, their milk diet, their bald crowns, their prattling, their playing, their short memory, their heedlessness, and all their other endowments, exactly agree; and the more they advance in years, the nearer they come back to their cradles, till like children indeed, at last they depart the world, without any remorse at the loss of life, or sense of the pangs of death. . . .

Look how your hard plodding students, by a close sedentary confinement of their books, grow mopish, pale, and thin, as if by a continual wrack of brains, and torture of invention, their veins were pumped dry, and their whole body squeezed sapless; whereas my followers are smooth, plump, and bucksome, and altogether as lusty as so many bacon-hogs, or sucking calves; never in their career of pleasure to be arrested with old age, if they could but keep themselves untainted from the infection of wisdom, the leprosy of which is only for prevention, lest they should otherwise have been too happy.

For a more ample confirmation of the truth of this it is confessed on all sides, that Folly is the best preservative of youth, and the most effectual antidote against age, and it is

a never-failing observation made of the people of Brabant, that, contrary to the proverb of *Older and wiser,* the more ancient they grow, the more foolish they are; and there is not any one country whose inhabitants enjoy themselves better, and rub through the world with more ease and quiet. To these are nearly related, as well by affinity of customs as of neighborhood, my friends, the Hollanders. Mine, I may well call them, for they stick so close and lovingly to me, that they are styled fools to a proverb, and yet scorn to be ashamed of their name. Well, let fond mortals go now in a needless quest of some enchanted fountain for a restorative of age, whereas the accurate performance of this feat lies only within the ability of my art and skill. . . .

Because it seemed expedient that man, who was born for the transaction of business, should have so much wisdom as should fit and capacitate him for the discharge of his duty herein, and yet lest such a measure as is requisite for this purpose might prove too dangerous and fatal, I was advised an antidote, to prescribe to give the infallible receipt of taking a wife, a creature so harmless and silly, and yet so useful and convenient, as might mollify and make pliable the stiffness and morose humor of man. Now that which made Plato doubt under what genus to rank woman, whether among brutes or rational creatures, was only meant to denote the extreme stupidity and folly of that sex, a sex so unalterably simple, that for any of them to thrust forward and reach at the name of wise, is but to make themselves the more remarkable fools; such an endeavor being but a swimming against the stream, nay, the turning of the course of nature. The bare attempt is as extravagant as it is impossible, for as it is a trite proverb, *That an ape will be an*

ape, though clad in purple, so a woman will be a woman, *i. e.,* a fool, whatever disguise she takes up. And yet there is no reason women should take it amiss to be thus charged; for if they do but rightly consider, they will find it is to Folly they are indebted for those endowments in which they so far surpass and excel man; as first, for their unparalleled beauty, by the charm of which they tyrannize over the greatest tyrants; for what is it but too great a portion of wisdom that makes men so tawny and thick-skinned, so rough and prickly-bearded, like an emblem of winter or old age, while women have such dainty smooth cheeks, such a low, gentle voice, and so pure a complexion, as if nature had drawn them for a standing pattern of all symmetry and comeliness? Besides, what greater or juster aim and ambition have they than to please their husbands? For this purpose they garnish themselves with paint, washes, curls, perfumes, and all other mysteries of ornament; yet after all they become acceptable to them only for their folly. Wives are always allowed their humor, yet it is only in exchange for titillation and pleasure, which indeed are but other names for Folly, as none can deny, who consider how a man must hug, and dandle, and caress, and play a hundred little tricks to please, interest and amuse his mistress.

But now some blood-chilled old men that are more for wine than for wenching, will pretend that in their opinion the greatest happiness consists in feasting and drinking. Grant it be so; yet certainly in the most luxurious entertainments it is Folly which must give the sauce and relish to the daintiest foods; so that if there be not one of the guests naturally fool enough to be played upon by the rest, they must procure some comical buffoon, that by his jokes, and

flouts, and blunders, he shall make the whole company split themselves with laughing: for to what purpose were it to be stuffed and crammed with so many dainty bits, savory dishes, and toothsome rarities, if after all this epicurism of the belly, the eyes, the ears and the whole mind of man, were not as well fostered and relieved with laughing, jesting, and similar diversions, which like second courses serve for the promoting of digestion? And as to all those shooing horns of drunkenness, the keeping every one his man, the throwing hey-jinks, the filling of bumpers, the drinking two in a hand, the beginning of mistress' healths; and then the roaring out of drunken catches, the calling in a fiddler, the leading out every one his lady to dance, and such like riotous pastimes, these were not taught or dictated by any of the wise men of Greece, but of Gotham rather, being my invention, and by me prescribed as the best preservative of health: each of which, the more ridiculous it is, the more welcome it finds. And indeed, to jog sleepily through the world, in a dumpish melancholy posture, cannot properly be said to live, but to be wound up as it were in a winding-sheet before we are dead, and so to be shuffled quick into a grave, and buried alive.

But there are yet others perhaps that have no taste for this sort of pleasure, but place their greatest content in the enjoyment of friends, telling us that true friendship is to be preferred before all other acquirements; that it is a thing as useful and necessary as the very elements, which could not long subsist without a natural combination; so pleasant that it affords as warm an influence as the sun itself; so honest (if honesty in this case deserve any consideration) that the very philosophers have not hesitated to

place this among the rest of their different sentiments of the chiefest good. But what if I make it appear that I also am the main spring and original of this endearment? Yes, I can easily demonstrate it, and that not by crabbed syllogisms, or a crooked and unintelligible way of arguing, but can make it (as the proverb goes) *As plain as the nose on your face.* Well then, to scratch and curry one another, to wink at a friend's faults; nay, to depict some failings as virtuous and commendable, is not this the nearest to being a fool? When one looking steadfastly in his mistress's face, admires a mole as much as a beauty spot; when another swears his lady's stinking breath is a most redolent perfume; and at another time the fond parent hugs the squint-eyed child, and pretends it is rather a becoming glance and winning aspect than any blemish of the eye-sight,—what is all this but the very height of Folly? Folly, I say, that both makes friends and keeps them so. . . .

The same which has been said of friendship is much more applicable to a state of marriage, which is but the highest advance and improvement of friendship in the closest bond of union. Good God! What frequent divorces or worse mischief would often sadly happen, were it not that man and wife were so discreet as to pass over light occasions of quarrel with laughing, jesting, dissembling, and similar ways of playing the fool? Nay, how few matches would go forward, if the hasty lover did but first know how many little tricks of lust and wantonness (and perhaps more gross failings) his coy and seemingly bashful mistress had often been guilty of? And how few marriages, when consummated, would continue happy, if the husband were not either sottishly insensible of, or did not purposely wink at and pass

over the lightness and forwardness of his good-natured wife? This peace and quietness is owing to my management, for there would otherwise be continual jars, and broils, and mad doings, if want of wit only did not at the same time make a contented cuckold and a still house. If the cuckoo sings at the back door, the unthinking cornute takes no notice of the unlucky omen, of others' eggs being laid in his own nest, but laughs about it, kisses his dear spouse, and all is well.

And indeed, it is much better patiently to be such a henpecked frigot, than always to be wracked and tortured with the grating surmises of suspicion and jealousy. In short, there is not one society, that would be comfortable, or indeed tolerable, without my assistance. There could be no right understanding between prince and people, master and servant, tutor and pupil, friend and friend, man and wife, buyer and seller, or any persons however otherwise related, if they did not cowardly put up with small abuses, sneakingly cringe and submit, or after all fawningly caress and flatter each other.

This you will say is much, but you shall yet hear what is more: tell me then, can any one love another that first hates himself? . . . We should sink without rescue into misery and despair, if we were not buoyed up and supported by self-love, which is but the elder sister (as it were) of Folly, and her own constant friend and assistant. For what is or can be more silly than to be lovers and admirers of ourselves? And yet, if it were not so, there would be no relish in any of our words or actions. Take away this one attribute of a fool, and the orator shall become as dumb and silent as the rostrum he stands on; the musician shall hang up his untouched instruments on the wall; the greatest actors shall

be hissed off the stage; the poet shall be burlesqued with his own doggerel rhymes; the painter shall himself vanish into an imaginary landscape; and the physician shall want food more than his patients do physic. In short, without self-love, instead of beautiful, you shall think yourself an old beldam of fourscore; instead of youthful, you shall seem to be just dropping into the grave; instead of eloquent, a mere stammerer; and in lieu of being gentle and complaisant, you shall appear like a downright country clown; it being so necessary that everyone should think well of himself before he can expect the good opinion of others.

Finally, when it is the main and essential part of happiness to desire to be no other than what we already are, this expedient is again wholly owing to self-love, which so flushes men with a good conceit of their own, that no one repents of his shape, of his wit, of his education, or of his country; thus the dirty, half drowned Hollander would not remove into the pleasant plains of Italy, the rude Thracian would not change his boggy soil for the best location in Athens, nor the brutish Scythian quit his thorny deserts to become an inhabitant of the Fortunate Islands. And, oh! the wonderful contrivances of nature, which has ordered all things in so even a method that wherever she has been less bountiful in her gifts, there she makes it up with a larger dose of self-love, which supplies the former defects, and makes all equal.

To enlarge farther, I may well presume to aver that there are no considerable exploits performed, no useful arts ininvented, of which I am not the respective author and manager. In the first place what is more lofty and heroical than war? And yet, what is more foolish than for some petty, trivial affront, to take such a revenge that both sides

shall be sure to be losers, and where the quarrel must be decided at the price of so many limbs and lives? And when they come to an engagement, what service can be done by such pale-faced students, as by drudging at the oars of wisdom have spent all their strength and activity? No, the only use is of blunt sturdy fellows that have little wit, and all the more resolution; except you would make a soldier of such another Demosthenes who threw down his arms when he came within sight of the enemy, and lost that credit in the camp which he gained in the pulpit. But counsel, deliberation, and advice, you say, are very necessary for the management of war: very true, but not such counsel as shall be prescribed by the strict rules of wisdom and justice; for a battle shall be more successfully fought by serving-men, porters, bailiffs, padders, rogues, gaol-birds, and similar tag-rags of mankind, than by the most accomplished philosophers. Of the latter, Socrates (by the oracle adjudged to be the wisest of mortals) is a notable example. When he appeared in the attempt of some public performance before the people, he faltered in the first onset, and could never recover himself, but was hooted and hissed home again; yet this philosopher was the less a fool for refusing the appellation of wise, and for not accepting the oracle's compliment; as also for advising that no philosophers should have any hand in the government of the commonwealth; he should likewise have added that they should be banished from all human society. And what made this great man poison himself to prevent the malice of his accusers? What made him the instrument of his own death, but only his excess of wisdom? . . .

Next to Socrates comes his scholar Plato, a famous ora-

tor indeed, who could be so abashed out of countenance by an illiterate rabble, as to demur, and hawk, and hesitate, before he could get to the end of one short sentence. Theophrastus was such another coward, who, when beginning to make an oration, was presently struck down with fear, as if he had seen some ghost or hobgoblin. Isocrates was so bashful and timorous that though he taught rhetoric, yet he could never have the confidence to speak in public. Cicero, the master of Roman eloquence, was wont to begin his speeches with a low quivering voice, just like a school boy, afraid of not saying his lesson perfect enough to escape whipping; and yet Fabius commends this property of Tully as an asset of a considerate orator, sensible of the difficulty of acquitting himself with credit. But what does he do more than plainly confess that wisdom is but a rub and impediment to the good management of any affair? How would these heroes crouch and shrink into nothing, at the sight of drawn swords, that are thus quashed and stunned at the delivery of bare words?

Now, then, what of Plato's fine sentence, that "happy are those commonwealths where either philosophers are elected kings, or kings turn philosophers"? Alas, this is so far from being true, that if we consult all historians for an account of past ages, we shall find no princes more weak, nor any people more slavish and wretched, than where the administration of affairs fell on the shoulders of some learned bookish governor. Of this truth the two Catos are excellent examples. The first embroiled the city, and tired out the senate by his tedious harangues of defending himself and accusing others; the younger was the unhappy occasion of the loss of the people's liberty, while by improper methods he

pretended to maintain it. To these may be added Brutus, Cassius, the two Gracchi, and Cicero himself, who was no less fatal to Rome than his parallel Demosthenes was to Athens: as likewise Marcus Antoninus, whom we may allow to have been a good emperor, yet the less so for having been a philosopher; and certainly he did not do half the kindness to his empire by his own prudent management of affairs as he did mischief by leaving such a degenerate successor as his son Commodus proved to be; but it is a common observation, that *A wise father has many times a foolish son,* nature so contriving it, lest the taint of wisdom, like hereditary distempers, should otherwise descend by propagation. . . .

It is Folly that in a varied dress, governs cities, appoints magistrates, and supports judicatures; and, in short, makes the whole course of man's life a mere children's play and worse than push-pin diversion.

The invention of all arts and sciences is likewise owing to the same cause, for what sedentary, thoughtful men would have beat their brains in the search of new and unheard of mysteries, if not urged on by the bubbling hopes of credit and reputation? They think a little glittering flash of vainglory is a sufficient reward for all their sweat and toil, and tedious drudgery, while they that are supposedly more foolish reap advantage of the others' labors. . . .

If all men were wise you see how soon the world would be unpeopled, and what need there would be of a second Prometheus, to plaster up the decayed image of mankind. I therefore come and stand in this gap of danger, and prevent farther mischief; partly by ignorance, partly by inadvertence; by the oblivion of whatever would be grating to remember, and the hopes of whatever may be grateful to ex-

pect, together palliating all griefs with an intermixture of pleasure; whereby I make men so far from being weary of their lives, that when their thread is spun to its full length, they are yet unwilling to die, and hardly can be brought to take their last farewell of their friends.

Thus some decrepit old fellows that look as hollow as the grave into which they are falling, that rattle in the throat at every word they speak, that can eat no meat but what is tender enough to suck, that have more hair on their beards than they have on their heads, and go stooping toward the dust to which they must shortly return; whose skin seems already like parchment, and their bones already dried to a skeleton; these shadows of men shall be most ambitious of living longer, and therefore fence off the attacks of death with all imaginable sleights and impostures; one shall dye his gray hairs, for fear their color should betray his age; another shall spruce himself up in a light periwig; a third shall repair the loss of his teeth with an ivory set; and a fourth perhaps shall fall deeply in love with a young girl, and accordingly court her with as much gaiety and briskness as the liveliest spark in the whole town: and we cannot but know that for an old man to marry a young wife without a portion, to be a cooler to other men's lust, has grown so common that it has become the fashion of the times. And what is still more comical, you shall have some wrinkled old woman, whose very looks are a sufficient antidote to lechery, that shall be canting out, *"Ah, life is a sweet thing,"* and so run caterwauling, and hire some strong-backed suitors to recover their almost lost sense of feeling; and to set themselves off the better, they shall paint and daub their faces, always stand a tricking up themselves at

their looking-glasses, go naked-necked, bare-breasted, be tickled at a vulgar jest, dance among the young girls, write love-letters, and do all the other knacks of attracting hot-blooded suitors; and in the meanwhile, however they are laughed at, they enjoy themselves to the full, live to their hearts' desire, and want for nothing that may complete their happiness. . . .

But (say our patrons of wisdom) the knowledge of arts and sciences is purposely attainable by men, that the defect of natural parts may be supplied by the help of those acquired: as if it were probable that nature, which has been so exact and curious in the mechanism of flowers, herbs, and flies, should have bungled most in her masterpiece, and made man as it were by halves, to be afterward polished and refined by his own industry. . . .

In the first golden age of the world there was no need of these perplexities; there was then no other sort of learning but what was collected from every man's common sense, improved by an easy experience.

What use could there have been of grammar, when all men spoke the same mother-tongue, and aimed at no higher pitch of oratory than barely to be understood by each other? What need of logic, when they were too wise to enter into any dispute, or what occasion for rhetoric, where no difference arose to require any laborious decision? And as little reason had they to be tied up by any laws, since the dictates of nature and common morality were sufficient restraint and obligation: and as for all the mysteries of providence, they made them rather the object of their wonder than their curiosity; and therefore were not so presumptuous as to dive into the depths of nature, to labor for the solving

of all phenomena in astronomy, or to wrack their brains in the splitting of entities, and unfolding the nicest speculations, judging it a crime for any man to aim at what is put beyond the reach of his shallow apprehension.

Thus was ignorance, in the infancy of the world, as much the parent of happiness as it has since been of devotion; but as soon as the golden age began by degrees to degenerate into the more common metals, then arts were likewise invented; yet at first but few in number, and those rarely understood, till in further process of time the superstition of the Chaldeans and the curiosity of the Greeks, spawned so many subtleties that now it is almost the work of several decades to become thoroughly acquainted with the criticisms in grammar alone. And among all the several Arts, those are proportionably most esteemed that come nearest to weakness and folly. For thus divines may bite their nails, and naturalists may blow their fingers, astrologers may know their own fortune is to be poor, and the logician may shut his fist and grasp the wind.

> *While all these hard-named fellows cannot make*
> *So great a figure as a single quack.*

And in this profession, those that have most confidence, though the least skill, shall be sure of the greatest number of customers; and indeed this whole art as it is now practised, is but one incorporated compound of craft and imposture.

Next to the physician comes the lawyer, (who will perhaps commence a suit with me for not having been first mentioned), who is so silly as to be, proverbially, an *ignoramus,* and yet by such are all difficulties solved, all contro-

versies determined, and all affairs managed so much to their own advantage that they secure those estates for themselves which they are employed to recover for their clients: while in the meantime the poor divine shall have the lice crawl upon his thread-bare gown, before, by all his sweat and drudgery, he can get money enough to purchase a new one. . . .

Let us now draw a comparison between the condition of a fool and that of a wise man, and see how infinitely the one outweighs the other.

Give me any instance, then, of a man as wise as you can fancy him possible to be, that has spent all his younger years in poring over books, and trudging after learning, in the pursuit whereof he squanders away the pleasantest time of his life in watching, sweating, and fasting; and in his latter days he never tastes one mouthful of delight, but is always stingy, poor, dejected, melancholy, burthensome to himself, and unwelcome to others, pale, lean, thin-jawed, sickly, contracting by his sedentariness such hurtful distempers as bring him to an untimely death, like rose-buds plucked before they bloom. A picture of the wise man's happiness—more the object of commiseration and pity than of jealousy and envy. . . .

But indeed the greater each man's madness is, the greater is his happiness, if it be but such a sort as proceeds from an excess of folly, which is so epidemical a distemper that it is hard to find any one man so uninfected as not to have sometimes a fit or two of some sort of frenzy. There is only this difference between the several patients: He that shall take a broomstick for a straight-bodied woman is without more ado sentenced for a madman, because this is so strange a

blunder that it very seldom happens; whereas he whose wife is a comon jilt, that keeps a warehouse free for all customers, and yet swears she is as chaste as an untouched virgin, and hugs himself in his contented mistake, is scarce taken notice of, because he fares no worse than a great many more of his good-natured neighbors. Among these are to be ranked such as take an immoderate delight in hunting, and think no music comparable to the sounding of horns and the yelping of beagles; and were they to take physic, they would without question think the most sovereign virtues to be in the *album Græcum* of a dog's excrements.

When they have run down their game, what strange pleasure they take in cutting of it up! Cows and sheep may be slaughtered by common butchers, but what is killed in hunting must be broken up by none under a gentleman, who shall throw down his hat, fall devoutly on his knees, and drawing out a slashing hanger (for a common knife is not good enough), after several ceremonies shall dissect all the parts as artificially as the best anatomist, while all that stand round shall look very intently, and seem to be mightily surprised with the novelty, though they have seen the same a hundred times before; and he that can but dip his finger, and taste of the blood, shall think his own bettered by it; and though the constant feeding on such diet does but assimilate them to the nature of those beasts they eat of, yet they will swear that venison is meat for princes, and that their living upon it makes them as great as emperors. . . .

Whether dice-players may be so favorably dealt with as to be admitted among the rest, has scarcely been resolved upon: but it is very vain and ridiculous when we see some persons so devoutly addicted to this diversion, that at the

first rattle of the box their heart shakes within them, and keeps consort with the motion of the dice: they are egged on so long with the hopes of always winning, till at last, in a literal sense, they have thrown away their whole estate, and made shipwreck of all they have, hardly escaping to shore with their own clothes to their backs; thinking it in the meanwhile a great piece of religion to be just in the payment of their stakes, and will cheat any creditor sooner than him who trusts them in play. . . .

The next to be placed among the regiment of fools are those who make a trade of telling or enquiring after incredible stories of miracles and prodigies: never doubting that a lie will choke them, they will muster up a thousand strange relations of spirits, ghosts, apparitions, raising of the devil, and similar bugbears of superstition, which the farther they are from being probably true, the more greedily they are swallowed, and the more devoutly believed. And these absurdities do not only bring an empty pleasure, and cheap diversion, but they procure a comfortable income to such priests and friars as by this craft get their gain. To these again are nearly related such others as attribute strange virtues to the shrines and images of saints and martyrs, and so would make their credulous proselytes believe that if they pay their devotion to St. Christopher in the morning, they shall be guarded and secured the day following from all dangers and misfortunes: if soldiers, when they first take arms, shall come and mumble over such a set prayer before the picture of St. Barbara, they shall return safe from all engagements: or if any pray to Erasmus on such particular holidays, with the ceremony of wax candles, and other fopperies, he shall in a short time be rewarded with a plentiful

increase of wealth and riches. The Christians have now their gigantic St. George, as well as the Pagans had their Hercules; they paint the saint on horseback, and picture the horse in splendid trappings, very gloriously accoutred; they scarcely refrain in a literal sense from worshiping the very beast.

What shall I say of those who maintain the cheat of pardons and indulgences? That by these they compute the time of each soul's residence in purgatory, and assign them a longer or shorter continuance, according as they purchase more or fewer of these paltry pardons, and saleable exemptions? Or what can be said bad enough of others, who pretend that by the force of such magical charms, or by the fumbling over their beads in the rehearsal of such and such petitions (which some religious imposters invented, either for diversion, or what is more likely, for advantage), they shall procure riches, honor, pleasure, health, long life, a lusty old age, nay, after death a sitting at the right hand of our Savior in His kingdom; though as to this last part of their happiness, they care not how long it be deferred, having scarcely any appetite for tasting the joys of heaven till they are surfeited, glutted, and can no longer relish their enjoyments on earth.

By this easy way of purchasing pardons, any notorious highwayman, any plundering soldier, or any bribe-taking judge, shall disburse some part of their unjust gains, and so think all their grossest impieties sufficiently atoned for; so many perjuries, lusts, drunkenness, quarrels, bloodsheds, cheats, treacheries, and all sorts of debaucheries, shall all be, as it were, struck a bargain for, and such a contract made,

as if they had paid off all arrears, and might now begin upon a new score.

And what can be more ridiculous than for some others to be confident of going to heaven by repeating daily those seven verses out of the Psalms which the devil taught St. Bernard, thinking thereby to have put a trick upon him, but that he was over-reached in his cunning.

Several of these fooleries, which are so gross and absurd that I myself am even ashamed to own them, are practised and admired, not only by the vulgar, but by such proficients in religion as one might well expect should have more wit.

The custom of each country challenging their particular guardian-saint, proceeds from the same principles of Folly; nay, each saint has his distinct office allotted to him, and is accordingly addressed upon the respective occasions: as one for the tooth-ache, a second to grant an easy delivery in child-birth, a third to recover lost goods, another to protect seamen in a long voyage, a fifth to guard the farmer's cows and sheep, and so on; for to rehearse all instances would be extremely tedious.

There are some more catholic saints petitioned to upon all occasions, as more especially the Virgin Mary, whose blind devotees think it proper now to place the mother before the son.

And of all the prayers and intercessions that are made to these respective saints, the substance of them is no more than downright Folly.

Among all the trophies that for tokens of gratitude are hung upon the walls and ceilings of churches, you shall find no relics presented as a memorandum of any that were ever

cured of Folly, or had been made one whit wiser. One perhaps after shipwreck got safe to shore; another recovered when he had been run through by an enemy; one, when all his fellow-soldiers were killed upon the spot, as cunningly perhaps as cowardly, made his escape from the field; another, while he was hanging, the rope broke, and so he saved his neck, and renewed his license for practising his old trade of thieving; another broke jail, and got loose; a patient (against his physician's will) recovered of a dangerous fever; another drank poison, which putting him into a violent looseness, did his body more good than harm, to the great grief of his wife, who hoped upon this occasion to have become a joyful widow; another had his wagon overturned, and yet none of his horses lamed; another had a grievous fall, and yet recovered from the bruise; another had been tampering with his neighbor's wife, and escaped very narrowly from being caught by the enraged cuckold in the very act. . . .

Almost all Christians are wretchedly enslaved to blindness and ignorance, which the priests are so far from preventing or removing that they blacken the darkness, and promote the delusion; wisely foreseeing that the people (like cows, which never give down their milk so well as when they are gently stroked), would part with less if they knew more, their bounty proceeding only from a mistake of charity. Now if any grave, wise man should stand up, and unseasonably speak the truth, telling everyone that a pious life is the only way of securing a happy death; that the best title to a pardon of our sins is purchased by a hearty abhorrence of our guilt, and sincere resolutions of amendment; that the best devotion which can be paid to any saints is to

imitate them in their exemplary life; if he should proceed thus to inform them of their several mistakes, there would be quite another estimate put upon tears, watchings, masses, fastings, and other severities, which before were so much prized, as persons will now be vexed to lose that satisfaction they formerly found in them.

In the same predicament of fools are to be ranked those who, while they are still living, and in good health, take so great a care how they shall be buried when they die, that they solemnly appoint how many torches, how many escutcheons, how many gloves to be given, and how many mourners they will have at their funeral; as if they thought they themselves in their coffins could be sensible of what respect was paid to their corpse; or as if they doubted they should rest a whit the less quiet in the grave if they were interred with less state and pomp.

Now, though I am in so great haste, that I would not willingly be stopped or detained, yet I cannot pass by without bestowing some remarks upon another sort of fools; who, though their first descent was perhaps no better than from a tapster or tinker, yet highly value themselves upon their birth and parentage. One fetches his pedigree from Æneas, another from Brute, a third from king Arthur: they hang up their ancestors' worm-eaten pictures as records of antiquity, and keep a long list of their predecessors, with an account of all their offices and titles, while they themselves are but transcripts of their forefathers' dumb statues, and have degenerated even into those very beasts which they carry in their coat of arms as ensigns of their nobility: and yet by a strong presumption of their birth and quality, they live not only the most unconcerned lives themselves, but

there are others too who exalt these brutes as almost equal to the gods. . . .

As nature in her dispensation of conceit has dealt with private persons, so has she given a particular smatch of self-love to each country and nation. Upon this account it is that the English challenge the prerogative of having the most handsome women, of being the most accomplished in the science of music, and of keeping the best tables. The Scotch brag of their gentility, and pretend the genius of their native soil inclines them to be good disputants. The French think themselves remarkable for elegance and good breeding; the Sorbonists of Paris pretend before any others to have made the greatest proficiency in polemic divinity. The Italians value themselves for learning and eloquence; and, like the Greeks of old, account all the world barbarians compared to themselves; to which piece of vanity the inhabitants of Rome are more especially addicted, pretending themselves to be owners of all those heroic virtues for which their city for so many ages since was deservedly famous. The Venetians stress their birth and pedigree. The Greeks pride themselves on having been the first inventors of most arts, and on their county being famed for the product of so many eminent philosophers. The Turks, and all the other refuse of Mohammedanism, pretend they profess the only true religion, and laugh at all Christians as superstitious, narrow-souled fools. The Jews to this day expect their Messias as devoutly as they believe in their first prophet Moses. The Spaniards cherish the repute of being accounted good soldiers. And the Germans are noted for their tall, proper stature, and for their skill in magic. . . .

In the meanwhile observe what a cheap purchase of hap-

piness is made by the strength of fancy. For whereas many things even of inconsiderable value would cost a great deal of pains and perhaps of pelf, to procure; opinion spares charges, and yet gives them to us in as ample a manner by conceit, as if we possessed them in reality. Thus he who feeds on a stinking dish of fish, such as another must hold his nose at a yard's distance from, yet if he feed heartily, and relish them palatably, they are to him as good as if they were freshly caught; whereas, on the other hand, if any one be invited to never so dainty a meal of sturgeon, if it go against his stomach to eat any, he may sit hungry, and bite his nails with greater appetite than his victuals. . . .

It is indeed almost incredible to relate what mirth, what sport, what diversion, the groveling inhabitants here on earth give to the above-seated gods in heaven: for these exalted deities spend their fasting sober hours in listening to those petitions that are offered up, and in succoring such as appeal to them for redress; but when they have imbibed a glass of nectar, they throw off all serious concerns, placing themselves on the ascent of some promontory in heaven, and from thence they survey the little mole-hill of earth. And trust me, there cannot be a more delightful prospect than to view such a theatre so stuffed and crammed with swarms of fools.

One falls desperately in love, and the more he is slighted the more does his spaniel-like passion increase; another is wedded to wealth rather than to a wife; a third is haunted with a jealousy of his visiting neighbors; another sobs and roars, and plays the child for the death of a friend or relative and lest his own tears should not rise high enough to express the torrent of his grief, he hires other mourners to

accompany the corpse to the grave, and sing its *requiem* in sighs and lamentations; another hypocritically weeps at the funeral of one at whose death he rejoices at heart; here a gluttonous cormorant, whatever he can scrape up, thrusts everything down his throat to pacify the cryings of a hungry stomach; there a lazy wretch sits yawning and stretching, and thinks nothing so desirable as sleep and idleness; some are extremely industrious in other men's business, and sottishly neglectful of their own; some think themselves rich because their credit is good, though they can never pay till they fail and compound for their debts; one is so covetous that he lives poor to die rich; one for a little uncertain gain will venture to cross the roughest seas and expose his life for the purchase of a livelihood; another will depend on the plunders of war, rather than on the honest gains of peace; some will close with and humor such warm old blades as have a good estate, and no children of their own to bestow it upon; others practise the same art of wheedling upon good old women that have hoarded and coffered up more bags than they know how to dispose of; both of these sly flatteries make fine sport for the gods, when they are beaten at their own weapons, and (as oft happens) are gulled by those very persons of whom they intended to make a prey. . . .

But stop; I should expose myself too far, and incur the guilt of being roundly laughed at, if I proceeded to enumerate the several kinds of the folly of the vulgar. I shall confine my following discourse, therefore, to such only as challenge the repute of wisdom, and seemingly pass for men of the soundest intellects.

And among these the Grammarians present themselves in the front,—a sort of men who would be the most miserable,

the most slavish, and the most hateful of all persons, if I did not in some way alleviate the cares and miseries of their profession by blessing them with a bewitching sort of madness: for they are not only liable to those five curses which they so often recite from the first five verses of Homer, but to five hundred more of a worse nature; as being always damned to thirst and hunger,—to be choked with dust in their unswept schools, (schools shall I term them, or rather laboratories, nay, bridewells, and houses of correction?), to wear themselves out in fret and drudgery; to be deafened with the noise of gaping boys; and in short, to be stifled with heat and stench; and yet they cheerfully endure all these inconveniences and, by the help of a fond conceit, they think themselves as happy as any men living: taking great pride and delight in frowning and looking fierce upon the trembling urchins, in boxing the ears, slashing, striking with the ferula, and in the exercise of all their other methods of tyranny; while thus lording it over a parcel of young, weak chits, they imitate the Cuman ass, and think themselves as stately as a lion that domineers over all the inferior herd. Elevated with this conceit, they can hold filth and nastiness to be an ornament; reconcile their noses to the most intolerable smells; and finally think that their wretched surroundings are the most pleasant and desirable that can be conceived,—and which they would not consent to exchange for the jurisdiction of the most sovereign potentate. And they are yet more happy by a strong persuasion of their own parts and abilities; for thus when their employment is only to rehearse silly stories, and poetical fictions, they will yet think themselves wiser than the most experienced philosopher; nay, they have an art of making ordinary people (such as

their school boys' fond parents), think them as grand as their own pride has made them. . . .

Of the same gang are those scribbling fops, who think to eternalize their memory by acting as authors among which, though they are all in some way indebted to me, those are more especially so who spoil paper in blotting it with mere trifles and impertinences. As for those graver drudgers to the press that write learnedly, beyond the reach of an ordinary reader, who dare submit their labors to the review of the most severe critic, these are not so liable to be envied for their honor as to be pitied for their toil and slavery. They make additions, alterations, blot out, write anew, amend, interline, turn it upside down, and yet can never please their fickle judgment, but that they shall dislike the next hour what they penned in the former; and all this to purchase the airy commendations of a few critical readers, which at most is but a poor reward for all their fastings, watchings, confinements, and brain-breaking tortures of invention. . . .

Even the learned and more judicious that have wit enough to laugh at the other's folly, are very much indebted to my goodness, which (except ingratitude has drowned their ingenuity), they must be ready upon all occasions to confess.

Among these I suppose the lawyers will shuffle in for precedence, and they of all men have the greatest opinion of their own abilities. They will argue as confidently as if they spoke gospel instead of law; they will cite you six hundred precedents, though not one of them come near to the case in hand! they will muster up the authority of judgments, deeds, glosses, and reports, and tumble over so many musty records, that they make their employment, though in itself

easy, the greatest slavery imaginable, always accounting that the best plea which they have taken the most pains to produce.

To these, as bearing a great resemblance to them, may be added logicians and sophisters, fellows that talk as much by rote as a parrot; who shall run down a whole bevy of gossiping old woman, nay, silence the very noise of a belfry, with louder clappers than those of the steeple; and if their unappeasable clamorousness were their only fault it would admit of some excuse; but they are at the same time so fierce and quarrelsome that they will wrangle bloodily for the least trifle, and be so intent and eager that they many times lose their game in the chase, and frighten away that truth for which they are hunting. . . .

Next to these come the philosophers, with their long beards and short cloaks, who esteem themselves as the only favorites of wisdom, and look upon the rest of mankind as the dirt and rubbish of the creation; yet these men's happiness is only a frantic craziness of brain. They build castles in the air, and infinite worlds in a *vacuum*. They will give you to a hair's breadth the dimensions of the sun, moon, and stars, as easily as they would that of a flagon or pipkin: —they will give an elaborate account of the cause of thunder, of the origin of the winds, of the nature of eclipses, and of the most abstruse difficulties in physics, without the least demur or hesitation, as if they had been admitted into the cabinet council of nature, or had been eye-witnesses to all the methods of creation; though in fact nature does but laugh at all their puny conjectures: for they never yet made one considerable discovery, as appears from the fact that on no single point of the smallest moment have they unan-

imously agreed; nothing being so plain or evident but that by some one it is opposed and contradicted. . . .

The divines present themselves next; but it may perhaps be most safe to pass them by, and not to touch upon so harsh a string as this subject would afford. Besides, the undertaking may be very hazardous, for they are a sort of men generally very hot and passionate; and should I provoke them, they would no doubt set upon me with a full cry, and force me with shame to recant. If I stubbornly refused to do this, they would presently brand me for a heretic, and thunder out an excommunication, which is their spiritual weapon to wound such as lift up a hand against them.

It is true, no men own less dependence on Folly, yet they have reason to confess themselves indebted for no small obligations. For it is by one of my properties, self-love, that they fancy themselves, with their elder brother Paul, caught up into the third heaven, from whence, like shepherds indeed, they look down upon their flocks (the laity), grazing as it were, in the vales of the world below. . . .

They will cut asunder the toughest argument with as much ease as Alexander did the Gordian knot; they will thunder out so may rattling terms as shall frighten an adversary into conviction. They are exquisitely dexterous in unfolding the most intricate mysteries; they will tell you to a tittle all the successive proceeding of Omnipotence in the creation of the universe; they will explain the precise manner of original sin being derived from our first parents; they will satisfy you in what manner, by what degrees, and in how long a time, our Savior was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and demonstrate in the consecrated wafer how accidents may subsist without a subject. Nay, these are ac-

counted trivial, easy questions; they have yet far greater difficulties behind, which, notwithstanding, they solve with as much expedition as the former; as namely, whether supernatural generation requires any instant of time for its acting, whether Christ, as a son, bears a double and specifically distinct relation to God the Father, and his virgin mother, whether this proposition is possible to be true that the first person of the Trinity hated the second, whether God who took our nature upon him in the form of a man, could as well have become a woman, a devil, a beast, an herb, or a stone, . . . whether in Christ's corporal presence in the sacramental wafer, his humanity be not abstracted from his Godhead, and whether after the resurrection we shall carnally eat and drink as we do in this life. . . .

St. Paul, without question, had a full measure of faith, yet when he lays down faith to be the substance of things not seen, these men carp at it as being an imperfect definition, and would undertake to teach the apostles better logic. Thus, the same holy author lacked nothing of the grace of charity, yet, say they, he describes and defines it but very inaccurately when he treats of it in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

The primitive disciples were very frequent in administering the holy sacrament, breaking bread from house to house; yet should they be asked of the *Terminus a quo* and the *Terminus ad quem,* the nature of transubstantiation, the possibility of one body being in several different places at the same time; the difference between the several attributes of Christ in heaven, on the cross, and in the consecrated bread; what time is required for the transubstantiating of the bread into flesh, and how it can be done by

a short sentence pronounced by the priest, which sentence is a species of discreet quantity, that has no permanent *punctum?*

Were they asked, these and several other confused queries, I do not believe they could answer so readily as our mincing school-men now-a-days take a pride in doing.

They were well acquainted with the Virgin Mary, yet none of them undertook to prove that she was preserved immaculate from original sin, as some of our divines now very hotly contend.

St. Peter had the keys of heaven given to him, and that by our Savior himself, who had never entrusted him except he had known him capable of their management and custody; and yet it is much to be questioned whether Peter was sensible of the subtlety broached by Scotus, that he may have the key of knowledge effectually for others who has no knowledge actually in himself.

Again, they baptized all nations, and yet never taught what was the formal, material, efficient, and final cause of baptism, and certainly never dreamt of distinguishing between a delible and an indelible character in this sacrament.

They worshipped in the spirit, following their master's injunction, "God is a spirit, and they which worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth"; yet it does not appear that it was ever revealed to them how divine adoration should be paid at the same time to our blessed Savior in heaven, and to his picture here below on a wall, drawn with arm extended, two fingers held out, a bald crown, and a circle round his head.

To reconcile these intricacies to an appearance of reason, requires three-score years in the study of metaphysics. . . .

St. Paul, who in the judgment of others is no less the chief of the apostles than he was in his own the chief of sinners, who being bred at the feet of Gamaliel, was certainly more eminently a scholar than any of the rest, yet he often exclaims against vain philosophy, warns us from debating about questions and strifes of words, and charges us to avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called; which he would not have done, if he had thought it worth his while to have become acquainted with them, which he might soon have been,—the disputes of that age being but small, and mere intelligible sophisms, in comparison with the vastly greater intricacies they are now improved into. However, our scholastic divines are so modest that if they meet with any passage in St. Paul, or any other penman of holy writ, not modeled or critically disposed of as they could wish, they will not roughly condemn it, but bend it rather to a favorable interpretation, out of reverence to antiquity, and respect to the holy scriptures; though indeed it were unreasonable to expect anything of this nature from the apostles, whose lord and master had given unto them to know the mysteries of God, but not those of philosophy.

If the same divines meet with anything of like nature unpalatable in St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Jerome, or others of the fathers, they will not hesitate to appeal from their authority, and even to resolve that they lay under a mistake.

Yet these ancient fathers were they who confuted both the Jews and Heathen, though they both obstinately adhered to their respective prejudices; they confuted them, I say, yet rather by their virtuous lives and good works

than by words and syllogisms: and the persons they thus proselyted were downright honest, well meaning people, such as understood plain sense better than any artificial pomp of reasoning: whereas if our divines should now set about the gaining of converts from paganism by their metaphysical subtleties, they would find that most of the persons they applied themselves to were either so ignorant as not at all to apprehend them, or so impudent as to scoff and deride them; or finally, so well skilled at the same weapons that they would be able to keep their pass, and fence off all assaults of conviction: and in this last way the victory would be altogether as hopeless as if two persons were combating, of so equal strength and dexterity that it were impossible that either one should overpower the other.

If my judgment may be taken, I would advise Christians, in their next expedition to a holy war, instead of those many unsuccessful legions which they have hitherto sent to encounter the Turks and Saracens, that they would furnish out their clamorous Scotists, their obstinate Occamists, their invincible Albertists, and all their forces of tough, crabbed and profound disputants: the engagement, I fancy, would be mighty pleasant, and the victory we may imagine unquestionably on our side. For which of the enemies would not veil their turbans at so solemn an appearance? Which of the fiercest Janizaries would not throw away his scimitar, and all the half-moons be eclipsed by the interposition of so glorious an army? . . .

Next to the theologians are another sort of brainless fools, who style themselves monks, or members of religious orders, though they assume both titles very unjustly: for as to the last, they have very little religion in them; and as to the

former, the etymology of the word monk implies a solitariness, or being alone; whereas they are so thick abroad that we cannot pass any street or alley without meeting them: and I cannot imagine which degree of men would be more hopelessly wretched if I did not stand their friend, and buoy them up in that lake of misery into which by the engagements of a religious vow they have voluntarily immerged themselves.

But when this sort of men are so unwelcome to others that the very sight of them is thought ominous, I still make them highly in love with themselves, and fond admirers of their own happiness. The first step they believe is profound ignorance, thinking carnal knowledge a great enemy to their spiritual welfare, and they seem confident of becoming greater proficients in divine mysteries, the less they are influenced with any human learning.

They imagine that they bear a sweet consort with the heavenly choir, when they tone out their daily tally of psalms, which they rehearse only by rote, without permitting their understanding or affections to go along with their voice.

Among these, some make a good and profitable trade by beggary, going about from house to house, not like the apostles, to break, but to beg, their bread; nay, they thrust themselves into all public-houses, come aboard the passage-boats, get into the traveling wagons, and omit no opportunity of time or place for craving people's charity, and doing a great deal of injury to common highway beggars by interfering with their traffic of alms.

And when they are thus voluntarily poor, destitute, not provided with two coats, nor with any money in their

purse, they have the impudence to pretend that they imitate the first disciples, whom their master expressly sent out in such an equipage.

It is amusing to observe how they regulate all their actions, as it were by weight and measure, to so exact a proportion, as if the whole loss of their religion depended upon the omission of the least punctilio.

Thus, they must be very critical in the precise number of knots requisite for tying on their sandals; what distinct colors their respective habits should be, and of what material; how broad and how long their girdles; how big, and in what fashion, their hoods; whether their bald crowns be to a hair's-breadth of the right cut; how many hours they must sleep, at what minute rise to prayers, etc.

And these several customs are altered according to the humors of different persons and places.

While they are sworn to the superstitious observance of these trifles, they not only despise all others, but are even inclined to fall out among themselves; for though they make profession of an apostolical charity, they will pick a quarrel, and be implacably passionate for such slight provocations as for putting on a coat the wrong way, for wearing clothes a little too dark in color, or any such nicety not worth speaking of.

Some are so obstinately superstitious that they will wear their upper garment of some coarse dog's hair stuff, and that next their skin as soft as silk; but others, on the contrary, will have linen frocks outermost, and their shirts of wool, or hair. Some again will not touch a piece of money, though they make no scruple of the sin of drunkenness, and the lust of the flesh. . . .

Most of them place their greatest stress for salvation on a strict conformity to their foppish ceremonies, and a belief of their legendary traditions; wherein they fancy to have acquitted themselves with so much of supererogation that one heaven can never be a condign reward for their meritorious life; little thinking that the Judge of all the earth at the last day shall put them off, with a "Who hath required these things at your hands?" and call them to account only for the stewardship of his legacy which was the precept of love and charity.

It will be interesting to hear their pleas before the great tribunal. One will brag how he mortified his carnal appetite by feeding only upon fish; another will urge that he spent most of his time on earth in the divine exercise of singing psalms; a third will tell how many days he fasted, and what severe penance he imposed on himself for bringing his body into subjection; another shall produce in his own behalf as many ceremonies as would load a fleet of merchantmen; a fifth shall plead that in threescore years he never so much as touched a piece of money, except he fingered it through a thick pair of gloves; a sixth, to testify his former humility, shall bring along with him his sacred hood, so old and nasty that any seaman had rather stand bareheaded on the deck than put it on to defend his ears in the sharpest storms; the next that comes to answer for himself shall plead that for fifty years together he had lived like a sponge upon the same place, and was content never to change his homely habitation; another shall whisper softly, and tell the Judge he has lost his voice by a continual singing of holy hymns and anthems; the next shall confess how he fell into a lethargy by a strict, reserved, and sedentary life; and the last shall in-

timate that he has forgotten to speak, by having always kept silence, in obedience to the injunction of taking heed lest he should have offended with his tongue. . . .

I willingly take my leave of these stage divines and pass now to kings, princes, and courtiers, who by paying me a devout acknowledgment, may justly challenge back the respect of being mentioned and taken notice of by me.

And first, had they wisdom enough to make a true judgment of things, they would find their own condition to be more despicable and slavish than that of their most menial subjects. For certainly none can esteem perjury or parricide a cheap purchase for a crown, if he seriously reflected upon that weight of cares with which a princely diadem is loaded.

He that sits at the helm of government acts in a public capacity, and so must sacrifice all private interest to the attainment of the common good; he must himself be conformable to those laws his prerogative exacts, or else he can expect no obedience paid them from others; he must have a strict eye over all his inferior magistrates and officers, or otherwise it is not to be doubted that they will carelessly discharge their respective duties. . . .

Kings are baited with so many temptations and opportunities to vice and immorality, such as high feeding, liberty, flattery, luxury, and the like, that they must stand perpetually on their guard, to fence off those assaults that are always ready to be made upon them.

In short, abating from treachery, hatred, dangers, fear, and a thousand other mischiefs impending on crowned heads, however uncontrollable they are this side the grave, yet after their reign here they must appear before a supremer judge, and there be called to an exact account for the discharge of

that great stewardship which was committed to their trust.

If princes did but seriously consider (and consider they would if they were but wise) these many hardships of a royal life, they would be so perplexed in the result of their thoughts, as scarcely to eat or sleep in quiet. But now by my assistance they leave all these cares to the gods, and mind only their own ease and pleasure, and therefore will admit none to their attendance but those who will divert them with sport and mirth, lest they should otherwise be seized with the surprisal of sober thoughts. They think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves in the duty of governing, if they do but go constantly hunting, breed good race-horses, sell places and offices to those of the courtiers that will give most for them, and find out new ways for invading their people's property, and securing a larger revenue for their own exchequer; for the procurement whereof they will always have some pretended claim and title; that though it be manifest extortion, yet it may bear the show of law and justice: and then they daub over their oppression with a submissive, flattering carriage that they may so far insinuate into the affections of the vulgar, that they may not tumult nor rebel, but patiently crouch to burdens and exactions.

Let us imagine now a person ignorant of the laws and constitutions of that realm he lives in, an enemy to the public good, studious only for his own private interest, addicted wholly to pleasures and delights, a hater of learning, a professed enemy of liberty and truth, careless and unmindful of the common concerns, taking all the measures of justice and honesty from the false beam of self-interest and advantage,—after this hang about his neck a gold chain, for an intimation that he ought to have all virtues linked together;

then set a crown of gold and jewels on his head, for a token that he ought to overtop and outshine others in all commendable qualifications; next, put into his hand a royal sceptre for a symbol of justice and integrity; lastly, clothe him with purple, for an hieroglyphic of a tender love and affection to the commonwealth.

If a prince should look upon this portraiture, and draw a comparison between that and himself, certainly he would be ashamed of his ensigns of majesty, and be afraid of being laughed out of them.

Next to kings themselves may come their courtiers, who, though they are for the most part a base, servile, cringing, low-spirited sort of flatterers, look big, swell great, and have high thoughts of their honor and grandeur.

Their confidence appears upon all occasions; yet in this one thing they are very modest, in that they are content to adorn their bodies with gold, jewels, purple, and other glorious ensigns of virtue and wisdom, but leave their minds empty and unfraught; and taking the resemblance of goodness to themselves, turn over the truth and reality of it to others. . . .

If you make a stricter inquiry into their other endowments, you shall find them mere sots and dolts. They will sleep generally till noon, and then their mercenary chaplains shall come to their bed-side, and entertain them perhaps with a short morning prayer.

As soon as they are dressed they must go to breakfast, and when that is done, immediately to dinner. When the cloth is taken away, then to cards, dice, tables, or a similar diversion. After this they must have one or two afternoon banquets, and so in the evening to supper. When they have

supped then begins the game of drinking; the bottles are marshaled, the glasses ranked, and round go the healths and bumpers till they are carried to bed. And this is the constant method of passing away their hours, days, months, years, and ages.

I have many times taken great satisfaction, standing in the court, and seeing how the tawdry butterflies vie one with another. The ladies shall measure the height of their humors by the length of their trails, which must be borne up by a page behind. The nobles jostle one another to get nearest to the king's elbow, and wear gold chains of that weight and size which require no less strength to carry than they do wealth to purchase.

And now for some reflections upon popes, cardinals, and bishops, who in pomp and splendor have almost equaled if not outdone secular princes.

Now, if any one considers that their upper crochet of white linen is to signify their unspotted purity and innocence; that their forked mitres, with both divisions tied together by the same knot, are to denote the joint knowledge of the Old and New Testament; that their always wearing gloves, represents their keeping their hands clean and undefiled from lucre and covetousness; that the pastoral staff implies the care of a flock committed to their charge; that the cross carried before them expresses their victory over all carnal affections; he (I say) that considers this, and much more of the like nature, must needs conclude that they are entrusted with a very weighty and difficult office. But, alas, they think it sufficient if they can but feed themselves; and as to their flock, they either commend them to the care of Christ himself, or commit them to the guidance of some inferior vicars

and curates; not so much as remembering what their name of bishop imports, to wit, labor, pains, and diligence, but by base simoniacal contracts, they are in a profane sense, *Episcopi, i. e.,* overseers of their own gain and income. . . .

Now as to the popes of Rome, who pretend themselves to be Christ's vicars, if they would but imitate his exemplary life, in being employed in an unintermitting course of preaching; in being attended with poverty, nakedness, hunger, and a contempt of this world; if they did but consider the import of the word Pope, which signifies a father; or if they did but practice their surname of most holy, what order or degrees of men would be in a worse condition?

There would be then no such vigorous making of parties and buying of votes in the Conclave, upon a vacancy of that See: and those who by bribery, or other indirect courses, should get themselves elected, would never secure their sitting firm in the chair by pistol, poison, force, and violence.

How much of their pleasure would be abated if they were but endowed with one dram of wisdom? Wisdom, did I say? Nay, with one grain of that salt which our Savior bade them not to lose the savor of.

All their riches, all their honors, their jurisdictions, their Peter's patrimony, their offices, their dispensations, their licenses, their indulgences, their long train of attendants (see in how short a compass I have abbreviated all their marketing of religion); in a word, all their perquisites would be forfeited and lost; and in their room would succeed watchings, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, hard studies, repenting sighs, and a thousand such like severe penalties: nay, what is still more deplorable, it would then follow that all

their clerks, amanuenses, notaries, advocates, proctors, secretaries, the offices of grooms, ostlers, serving-men, pimps, (and something else, which for modesty's sake I shall not mention); in short, all these troops of attendants which depend on his holiness would all lose their respective employments. This indeed would be hard, but what remains would be more dreadful: the very Head of the Church, the spiritual prince, would then be brought from all his splendor to the poor equipage of a scrip and staff.

But all this is upon the supposition only that they understood the circumstances they are placed in; whereas now, by a wholesome neglect of thinking, they live as well as heart can wish.

Whatever toil and drudgery belongs to their office, that they assign over to St. Peter or St. Paul, who have time enough to mind it; but if there be any pleasure and grandeur, that they assume to themselves, as being "hereunto called" so that by my influence no sort of people live more to their own ease and content.

They think to satisfy that Master they pretend to serve, our Lord and Savior, with their great state and magnificence, with the ceremonies of installments, with the titles of reverence and holiness, and with exercising their episcopal function only in blessing and cursing.

The working of miracles is old and out-dated; to teach the people is too laborious; to interpret scripture is to invade the prerogative of the schoolmen; to pray is too idle; to shed tears is cowardly and unmanly; to fast is too mean and sordid; to be easy and familiar is beneath the grandeur of him, who, without being intreated, will scarce give princes the

honor of kissing his toe; finally, to die for religion is too self-denying; and to be crucified as their Lord of Life, is base and ignominious.

Their only weapons ought to be those of the Spirit; and with these indeed they are mighty liberal, as with their interdicts, their suspensions, their denunciations, their aggravations, their greater and lesser excommunications, and their roaring bulls, that frighten whomsoever they are thundered against; and these most holy fathers never issue them more frequently than against those who, at the instigation of the devil, and not having the fear of God before their eyes, do feloniously and maliciously attempt to lessen and impair St. Peter's patrimony. And though that apostle tells our Savior in the gospel, in the name of all the other disciples, "We have left all and followed you," yet they claim as his inheritance, fields, towns, treasures, and large dominions. In order to defend these, inflamed with a holy zeal, they fight with fire and sword, to the great loss and effusion of Christian blood, thinking they are apostolical maintainers of Christ's spouse, the church, when they have murdered all such as they call her enemies; though indeed the church has no enemies more bloody and tyrannical than such impious popes who give dispensations for not preaching Christ; evacuate the main effect and design of our redemption by their pecuniary bribes and sales; adulterate the gospel by their forced interpretations, and undermining traditions; and lastly, by their lusts and wickedness grieve the Holy Spirit, and make their Savior's wounds bleed anew. . . .

The inferior clergy, deeming it improper not to conform to their patrons and diocesans, devoutly tug and fight for

their tithes with syllogisms, and arguments, as fiercely as with swords, sticks, stones, or anything that comes next to hand. When they read the rabbies, fathers, or other ancient writings, how quick-sighted are they in spying out any sentences with which they may frighten the people, and make them believe that more than the tenth is due, passing by whatever they meet with in the same authors that remind them of the duty and difficulty of their own office.

They never consider that their shaven crown is a token that they should pare off and cut away all the superfluous lusts of this world, and give themselves wholly to divine meditation; but instead of this, our bald-pated priests think they have done enough, if they do but mumble over such a fardel of prayers; which it is a wonder if God should hear or understand, when they whisper them so softly, and in so unknown a language, which they can scarcely hear or understand themselves. This they have in common with other mechanics, that they are most subtle in the craft of getting money, and wonderfully skilled in their respective dues of tithes, offerings, perquisites, etc.

Thus they are all content to reap the profit, but as for the burden, that they toss as a ball from one hand to another, and assign it to any they can get or hire. For as secular princes have their judges and subordinate ministers to act in their name, and supply their stead; so ecclesiastical governors have their deputies, vicars, and curates, nay, many times turn over the whole care of religion to the laity. The laity, supposing they have nothing to do with the church (as if their baptismal vow did not initiate them members of it), make it over to the priests; of the priests

again, those that are secular, thinking their title implies them to be a little too profane, assign this task over to the canons regular, the latter to the monks, the monks bandy it from one order to another, till it light upon the mendicants; they lay it upon the Carthusians, which order alone keeps honesty and piety among them, but really keep them so close that nobody could ever yet see them.

Thus the Popes, thrusting out their sickle into the harvest of profit, leave all the other toil of spiritual husbandry to the bishops, the bishops bestow it upon the pastors, the pastors on their curates, and the curates commit it to the mendicants, who return it again to such as well know how to take good advantage of the flock, by securing the benefit of their fleece.

But I would not be thought purposely to expose the weaknesses of popes and priests, lest I should seem to recede from my title, and make a satire instead of a panegyric. Nor let anyone imagine that I reflect on good princes, by commending bad ones. I did this only in brief, to show that there is no person that can lead a comfortable life, except he enter my society, and retain me for his friend. Nor indeed can it be otherwise, since fortune, that empress of the world, is so closely allied with me that to wise men she is always stingy, and sparing of her gifts, but is profusedly liberal and lavish to fools. . . .

But I doubt not that I have forgotten myself, and have already transgressed the bounds of modesty. However, if I have said anything too confidently or impertinently, be pleased to consider that it was spoken by Folly, and that under the person of a woman; yet at the same time remember the applicableness of that Greek proverb:

A fool oft speaks a seasonable truth . . . .

I perceive now that, for a concluding treat, you expect a formal epilogue, and the summing up of all in a brief recitation; but I will assure you, you are grossly mistaken if you suppose that after such a hodge-podge medley of speech I should be able to recollect anything I have delivered. Besides, as it is an old proverb, *I hate a pot companion with a good memory;* so indeed I may as truly say, *I hate a hearer that will carry anything away with him.* Wherefore, in short:

Farewell! live long, drink deep, be jolly,
Ye most illustrious votaries of folly!

SUGGESTED PROBLEMS

1. Make a comparison between Italian humanism and Transalpine humanism.

2. Explain why Erasmus was cosmopolitan in his outlook on social and political conditions.

3. Define and briefly describe the German Renaissance.

4. Evaluate *The Letter to Servatius* as a source of information about the life of Erasmus.

5. Write an essay on the controversy between Reuchlin and the theologians at Cologne.

6. Prepare a paper on the underlying aims of *The Letters of Obscure Men.*

7. Show what these letters have in common with the *Colloquies* of Erasmus.

8. From what you have read of *The Praise of Folly* give an estimate of the literary value of this work.

9. Enumerate the classes of people who were bound to dislike *The Praise of Folly.*

10. Show where Erasmus in this booklet seeks to entertain his readers and where he tries to give instruction.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Rudolph Agricola called the Petrarch of Germany?

2. Which was the leading German university in the year 1500?

3. Was it natural for German humanists to feel antagonistic toward Italian humanists?

4. Why did Erasmus support Reuchlin and disapprove of *The Letters of Obscure Men?*

5. Were there many scholars among the monks in the fifteenth century?

6. Did Erasmus realize why he entered a monastery?

7. Why did Erasmus feel so much at home among the Oxford Reformers?

8. What is the meaning of the letter written by the fictitous Buntemantel? And of the next one?

9. Is scholastic philosophy attacked in any of the letters you have read?

10. Does the letter by Schafmaul represent an attack on the Christian religion?

11. What does Erasmus aim at in the colloquy entitled *The Shipwreck?*

12. Which selections from *The Praise of Folly* appeal to you as the most witty, or the most effective from the standpoint of a reformer?

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